

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE
STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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NEW YORK, DECEMBER 16, 1903.

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THE TWENTY DOCTORS; OR, THE MYSTERY OF THE COAST.

By CAPT THOS H. WILSON.



Harry raised his oar, and struck the ruffian on the head with the blade. Tim Bucket was close behind with a boathook in his hand, and about to throw it over the gunwhale, but Jack fell against him.

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The Twenty Doctors

OR,

THE MYSTERY OF THE COAST.

BY CAPTAIN THOS. H. WILSON.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT THE FISHERMAN FOUND ON THE BEACH AT SEA CLIFF.

"It's as wild a night, boys, as any we've had on this coast for twenty year."

"Yes, and you might say forty year, Hal Halpine, and not go astray."

"I pity the poor sailors out at sea, bound in this night, but I think of myself, too, and I'm off to see what the waves may have washed up."

The little tavern of the stragglng coast village of Sea Cliff was as comfortable a place as one would wish to be in, one wild November night, some thirty years ago, and its bar and parlor were crowded with fishermen, sailors, wreckers, and idlers about town, all anxious to keep warm and hear the latest gossip.

Hal Halpine was a young fisherman of twenty-two, married to a pretty girl of the village, and the owner of a small schooner named Kate, which was the means of securing a fairly decent living in those hard times.

Halpine was a wrecker also, at times—that is, he indulged in the legitimate business of rescuing distressed vessels saving crew and cargo and claiming moderate salvage, or, if wreckage was washed ashore to which there was no claimant, keeping it a reasonable time and then selling it for his own advantage.

That is, or was, the true wrecker, but, later on, the term was applied to dastardly scoundrels, who lured a vessel to destruction by false beacons, and then robbed her of her riches, often murdering those of her passengers or crew who survived the perils of the deep, and seizing their belongings, great or small, threw the bodies into the sea, and thus destroyed the evidence of their guilt.

Hal Halpine was none of these, for as yet the lust of gold had not darkened his soul, and a braver seaman, a better husband, or a merrier companion, could not have been found on all the coast from the Bay of Fundy to the Gulf of Mexico.

"Won't you have another mug of hot punch before you go out, Halpine?" asked one of his comrades, the man who had

answered the remark quoted at the beginning of the chapter.

"You'll need it, lad, if you're going to face to-night's wind."

"Rum and I are not very good friends, Jock, and I think the less I take the better, particularly when I've work on hand."

"That's just when you need it the most, to brace you up," spoke one of the men.

"No, Jan, you're wrong."

"Oh, but on such a night——"

"With the wind blowing a living gale——"

"And the snow flying as thick as feathers from a torn bolster——"

"And the sea a-roaring like as if it were hungry and wanted——"

"Another bowl of punch, Mrs. Jolly!"

The last words were spoken by Jock Angus, a brawny fisherman, and almost at the same time the plump little landlady appeared with the punch, which she set upon the table around which Hal and his friends were gathered.

Detaining hands were laid upon Halpine, and, rather than give offense, he remained long enough to drink a mug of steaming punch, and then, drawing his cap down upon his head, taking an extra twist in his woolen muffler, and buttoning his coat, he went out into the night and the storm.

He made his way toward the beach, where the waves were rolling in with a mighty roar, as though eager to sweep all before them, when suddenly, in a momentary lull of the tempest, he fancied he heard the sound of a child crying.

Immediately afterward there was a flash in the sky, and a rocket went hissing up into the heavens, and presently let fall a shower of stars, which hung suspended in the heavens for a few moments, and revealed a startling sight.

The fisherman had not sought the beach in vain, for there, driving toward shore, her sails blown to shreds, her mast gone by the board, and her decks swept by the angry waves, was a vessel of medium size dashing right toward him.

That someone still remained on board was evident by the rocket having been fired, and now a second shot into the air had cast a weird light over the awful scene.

Halpine took a step forward, and then his foot struck something, and again that cry arose.

Stooping down, he felt a bundle at his feet, and lifting it up, discovered by the warm pressure of two chubby hands against his face that it contained a living child, evidently washed ashore from the very wreck before him.

In another instant he was forced to retreat before the incoming waves, and then, with a sickening crash, mingled with the roar of the wind and the cries of despairing men, the ill-fated vessel struck the beach.

The glare of the rockets had now faded away, and nothing could be seen in the awful darkness, suspense adding its terrors to the knowledge already gained.

If the wind had roared before it now thundered, and with the noise of the sea drowning every other sound, the waves tossing the spray high in air, and entrenching upon the shore to a point never before reached.

With the bundle he had picked up tucked snugly under his arm, Halpine retreated, and as it was not a long distance to his snug cottage—built of the wreck of the stern of a once noble ship—Halpine took his way thither at once.

"See what I have brought you, Kate," he said, putting the bundle on the old-fashioned settle near the fire.

"Why, it's a baby, and cold, and wet, poor thing. We must take care of the poor little fellow."

"It's a boy, then? Trust you women for finding that out. How do you tell? By the squeal? Bless me if I can tell what it is, except a pretty baby, wrapped up in an old cloak."

"Men don't know anything about babies," laughed his wife, as she threw aside the wet cloak, took off the child's saturated garments, and, wrapping it up in a warm blanket, tucked it away in a corner of the settle, where it soon fell asleep.

"Was there a wreck, Hal? Was no one saved except this poor boy?"

But Halpine was too much interested in certain things he had found in the pocket of the cloak to heed his wife's questions, and now, drawing a heavy oaken chair before the fire, and lighting his pipe, he devoured the contents of a packet, which, wrapped in oiled silk, had defied the action of the salt water, in which it had been submerged.

"What is it, Hal?" asked his pretty wife. "Who is the baby? Some fine gentleman's son?"

"There is, on one of the wildest parts of the New England coast, between latitude 41 and 43, twelve miles or so from the land, a rocky, cliff-bound island which will serve your purpose well."

"What are you saying, Hal?" asked the woman in surprise.

"The approach to this island is so dangerous, nay, so well-nigh impossible, that you will not find one man who has ever landed upon its forbidding shores, and yet, to him who has nerve and courage, there is a safe path through which he can take a vessel to a secure anchorage in a placid lake hidden among the crags and barren hills of the island."

"For mercy's sake, what are you saying?" cried the fisherman's wife, throwing herself at her husband's feet.

"I am reading, Kate," answered Hal. "I think I know the place. Listen."

"On nearly all sides the island is defended by precipitous bluffs, but where these are not there are stretches of treacherous sand, sunken rocks, hidden reefs, dangerous counter currents, whirlpools, or passages so narrow that not even a canoe could pass them. On the south there is a cluster of islands, some of them mere rocks, and it is among these that the channel is to be found, but woe to him who attempts to run it without knowing every inch."

"What place is this, Hal?"

"The islands are twenty in number, and around some the water rushes at so terrible a rate that a vessel would be hurled upon the rocks before one could move a hand. These twenty sentinels guard the approach to the island, and here you might

land millions, and it would be as safe as though buried fathoms deep in the sea."

"To whom is the letter written, Hal?"

"I know the place now," cried Halpine, not heeding her question. "It is the Island of Twenty Doctors, as the French Canadians call it, though why I don't know; but never a one of them, daring though they are, nor an Indian even, has ever been known to land upon it."

"The Twenty Doctors?"

"Those are the islands or rocks, but who first called them so, or why, no one ever knew."

"But what good will it do one, Hal, to land on such an island if the passage to it is so perilous?"

"It would be a good place to store your treasure, and you will see by the old parchment that I inclose that a once famous pirate is thought to have placed a portion of his gold there. I had the document from the descendent of one of his men, but, although I have defied the Doctors and set foot upon its mystic shores, I have not been able to find the hidden gold."

"Dying, I now confide to you the secret, trusting that you may be brave enough to run the gantlet of these Twenty Doctors, so eager to bleed you and take your life. The way once found, you have your storehouse at hand, and can pursue your trade on the American coast as boldly as I have done on this."

"He calls it the Island of Twenty Doctors, then, as the Frenchmen do!" cried Hal, "and in this old chart, made over a hundred years ago, the same name occurs."

"But who is he that sends this letter?"

"There is no name signed, no address given. Trust me to make my way through these dangers, Kate, and set foot upon the island."

"Of what use will that be to you?" she asked, and then, as if struck by a sudden thought, and a terrible one, "Hal!" she cried, "in mercy's name make no evil use of your knowledge! If I thought you would I would pray that your vessel might be dashed upon the rocks and your life sacrificed to the fury of the Twenty Doctors! Destroy the chart, forget this letter, lest you be tempted!"

"Why, Kate, anybody will tell you that there's not a more honest man on all the coast than I."

"Yes—yes! But of late you have gone with Jock and Jan and Pike too much for your own good name. Men say you will be tempted and get the same evil reputation that——"

"Nonsense! Who knows that Jan and Jock are smugglers? Men say so, but if they know they must be such themselves."

"But you will destroy——"

"Not I! The chart and my own pluck and skill shall guide me to the island."

"Oh, Hal!"

But the man was gone forth into the night and the storm.

CHAPTER II.

HOW HARRY HALPINE ESCAPED THE PERILS OF THE TWENTY DOCTORS.

May Maxwell, the ward of Gen. Ainsworth, was the prettiest girl in Sea Cliff, and had many admirers, one of the most favored of whom was Harry Halpine, son of the retired fisherman.

Fifteen years have passed since that stormy night in November, and Harry has never known the secret of his life, thinking, as everyone else does in Sea Cliff, that he is the son of Halpine, the fisherman.

The latter's wife died some years before this present time, or, at least, she was reported lost at sea in her husband's vessel, her body having never been recovered.

Harry and his father lived alone, and Mrs. Bounce, formerly landlady of the village tavern, was their housekeeper, and, as the gossips said, not at all unwilling to become Mrs. Halpine.

One lovely summer day Harry, a handsome young fellow of seventeen or eighteen, took it into his head to give May Maxwell a sail, being as well able to handle a boat as anyone along the shore.

On his way to the house of the general, May's guardian, he met a party of revenue officers and soldiers from a station some distance away, and among them was his particular chum, Nat Nutting.

"What's up, Nat?" he asked.

"Captain Dash, the notorious smuggler, has been seen in these parts again, and the officers are trying to catch him."

"Well, they may do it on land, but they will never do so when once he gets to sea."

"You're right, for the Twenty Doctors take better care of him than they do of his pursuers."

"Are they going to chase him to-day? Wouldn't I like to be of the party!"

"You can be, if you like," said one of the revenue men, Sergeant Sumner, as he was called. "If you can take us through the channel, past those Twenty Doctors and up to the island, you'll earn a reward of a thousand dollars."

"That would be a great temptation to the smuggler's men, I should think."

"So it would be if any of them knew the channel; but it is said that they do not, and that only Capt. Dash himself can take the vessel through."

"Well, I am afraid I would not dare to take so great a risk. Think of the lives that have already been lost on those fearful rocks, those horrid whirlpools and treacherous shoals. I would not dare attempt it."

"Will you go with us, then?"

"Yes, but not to-day. I have other business," and Harry went on his way, having time, however, to hear the sergeant say:

"H'm! that only confirms my suspicions."

Not stopping to think what the words might mean, Harry hastened on, but when he reached the general's house and was admitted by the servant, he found the old soldier in the hall, and was greeted with:

"Well, young man, what do you want?"

The tone was by no means cordial, and was totally different to that in which the general had always addressed him hitherto, it having been generally remarked that the old man's liking of him was a strong point in his favor in his suit for pretty May.

"I have come to take Miss May out for a sail," answered Harry, not understanding the general's manner.

"Do you know who you are?" demanded the other abruptly.

"Harry Halpine, the son of Halpine, the fisherman."

"A man of doubtful reputation, to say the least."

"Sir!" said Harry, reddening, "my father is as honest a man as any to be found in Sea Cliff, and has earned his money by untiring——"

"I do not intend to argue the point, sir," interrupted Gen. Ainsworth, severely. "My ward cannot go with you, and I request, not to use a harsher word, that you will not again visit this house. There is the door."

Hardly knowing what to make of all this, and resolving not to be told twice to leave, Harry took his departure at once, but with so haughty a mien that the old man was more wroth than before, and for the rest of the day made the lives of his dependents a burden to them.

Striding hurriedly down the path and out at the gate, Harry came upon a young fellow of about his own age who had just descended from a light carriage and was evidently about to enter the house.

This young fellow, somewhat of a snob, and called Guy Darcy, was considered Harry's most formidable rival, but, unlike Harry, was of a churlish disposition, and had, on more than one occasion, it was said, circulated reports derogatory to Harry's character.

As the two young men now met, Darcy curled his lip, and said:

"Kicked out, eh? I thought so. The sons of smugglers are not fit companions for ladies."

"Do you mean that remark for me?" demanded Harry, angrily, turning as he spoke.

"Of course I do."

"Then take my receipt for it, you puppy!"

Like a lightning flash Harry's fist flew out, and striking the young fellow squarely between the eyes, stretched him out upon the ground, besides leaving its mark in the shape of two black eyes, which speedily developed themselves in spite of cold water, oysters, vinegar, and brown paper, and other remedies thought by the old women of the town to be invaluable in preventing discoloration of the skin after a blow.

Meanwhile Harry rushed down to the shore where his yacht lay, and was about to get up sail and hurry away anywhere in order to calm his stormy feelings, when he saw his father approaching along the beach.

"Whither bound, Harry?" the elder man asked, cheerily.

"Anywhere, nowhere, I don't care where!" answered Harry, in vexed tones.

"Then take me along, for that is just where I want to go," replied Halpine, stepping aboard and beginning to assist his son in his preparations for departure.

Nothing was said for some time, but at last, when all was ready and the little yacht was speeding over the rippling waves, Halpine, who held the tiller, and now and then slackened or drew in the sheet of the mainsail, said carelessly:

"I thought you were going to take May Maxwell out this afternoon?"

"So I was, but Gen. Ainsworth insulted me; said you were a man of doubtful reputation, and refused me the house. Then young Guy Darcy said something of the same sort, and I knocked him down for his impudence."

"Served the puppy right," muttered Halpine, "and if Ainsworth had been younger I'd have done the same to him. What did the old braggart say of me?"

"Only what I have told you, but that was enough."

"Quite so," muttered Halpine. "But you don't believe him?"

"Indeed I don't!" cried Harry, warmly. "There isn't a better man in all the length and breadth of the coast, and if anyone says no I'll send the lie down his throat with my fist."

"You're a good boy, Harry," said his father, smiling. "But I wouldn't mind what people say. You can't stop slanderous tongues from wagging. Let them tire themselves out. Luff a bit, lad. I wouldn't go so far out to sea."

Harry was now somewhat mollified, and he made no further reference to the subject that had so annoyed him, steering under his father's directions without looking to see particularly where they were going.

Thus they sailed on for more than an hour, gradually engaging in conversation, until Harry had forgotten all about his grievance, when, all of a sudden, he looked up, darted a swift glance ahead of him, and, with pale and faltering lips, cried out:

"Father, do you see where we are going? We are driving right toward the Twenty Doctors. We are lost! Did you not know this?"

He was about to reverse the tiller and put about, when Halpine placed a firm hand on his arm, and said, quietly:

"There is no danger, boy. I know the channel, and can take you straight to the island. Would you not like to visit it?"

Keep her as she is till I give you other orders, and remain calm."

"You know the channel?" gasped Harry, a strange calmness coming over him.

"Yes."

"But they say that only the smuggler, Capt. Dash, knows the way to the island."

"A silly tale of old women," laughed Halpine. "Do as I tell you and you will reach it. Mark well every change, and in God's name don't lose courage. The path is an awful one to tread, but you are a brave fellow, and I would not have it said that you fear danger. Besides, you might want to visit the place alone."

"Yes, and hunt out this villainous law breaker," cried Harry, eagerly. "That's what I would like."

They were now within less than a hundred yards of the island with its attendant islets, the churning foam being seen most distinctly, while the roar of the breakers already sounded in their ears.

"Do you see the little round rock just in front of you?" asked Halpine, sitting so close to Harry that the latter could not avoid hearing him. "That is the Little Doctor. Steer north by east, between that and the island on your left, which is the Crooked Doctor. You will remember the names?"

Harry nodded, and taking his course by the compass, steered straight between the little round rock and a long low island, shaped like a letter U flattened out.

The current was strong, and there were eddies which threatened to seize the vessel and hurl it upon the rocks, but with a firm hand Harry kept on until right abreast a white rock on the end of the Crooked Doctor, when, at a sign from Halpine, he made a sharp turn of nearly eight points and passed the middle rocks of a group of seven, being all round and plump and looking just alike.

"The Seven Fat Doctors," pronounced Halpine, and Harry understood, though no sound could be heard in the awful hubbub.

Between the third and fourth—counting from the left—the vessel made her way under Harry's guiding hand, Halpine indicating the courses by motions to the right or left, heading straight for a long sandy island, which Halpine said was one of seven Quack Doctors, and must be carefully avoided.

On the right was a wedge-shaped island formed of some reddish stone, and this was Doctor Redhead, around the smaller end of which the vessel turned again and went due east, between it and an island shaped like a mitten, which was another Quack Doctor, and must be given as wide a berth as possible.

The course was now exactly to the east until the vessel's head came in a line with a round island, higher and larger than the group of seven, and one a trifle larger than the Little Doctor, at the entrance of the channel.

"Keep the Round Doctor dead astern and the Good Doctor dead ahead!" roared Halpine—"due north till you reach him." Harry was pale and nervous, for it seemed to him as if he were rushing straight to destruction, especially as he could see a counter current sweeping by him not three fathoms away on the right, past an oddly shaped rock of great size, the conical peak of which was as white as snow, a fuzz of blackish, stunted bushes encircling it lower down.

"Never mind the Bald Doctor; he is more dangerous than he looks, and not half as bad as the Quacks."

Straight for the Good Doctor went the vessel, and it seemed to Harry that they would drive right upon it, when they suddenly struck an eddy and whirled around to the northwest, when Halpine pointed out a black cross on the perpendicular cliff, indicating that Harry must head for it, until it began to disappear, when the course was due north, straight for a line of unbroken cliffs.

Harry thought that now their doom was certain, but suddenly, when the vessel was within fifty feet of the bluffs, a long narrow passage appeared on the right, the course was altered, and, after passing through a quiet but winding channel, they came to a calm and beautiful lake, with a shining white beach in front, with groves and green hills on either side the water being as clear as crystal, and reflecting the blue of the sky above them.

"There, my lad, you have passed the Twenty Doctors and anchored in safety and in health in this tranquil lake," said Halpine, as Harry dropped the tiller.

"But I see no one here," said Harry. "No vessel, no evidence of life. Do the smugglers really come here?"

"Yes."

"How do you know this?"

"Because I am their leader."

"You!"

"Yes. I am Captain Dash."

Harry would have fallen, but Halpine caught him, and hissed:

"Be a man! Show the courage you have always shown. I have told you how to get in here; I must now show you the way out, for one is as important as the other."

Harry said nothing, and Halpine drew a rough chart of the islands on the deck, pointing them out by name, indicating the courses to be taken, and impressing upon his son's mind the necessity of not deviating from them in the least, for the slightest swerving would cause their destruction.

"And they were right," muttered Harry, in hard tones. "I am the son of a smuggler. Well, then, let them beware how they taunt me, lest I show them that I, too, can be as unforgiving as Capt. Dash himself."

CHAPTER III.

MANY STRANGE THINGS HAPPEN, AND MRS. BOUNCE HOLDS HER TONGUE.

It was one thing for people to say that Halpine was the smuggler captain and another to prove it, for the man's public character was above suspicion, and those who had started the reports against him were not above suspicion themselves, their word being no better than their bond, and both were worthless.

Harry kept his own counsel, and after his return to Sea Cliff made out a rough chart of the island and the rocks of the Twenty Doctors to be used for his own guidance, saying nothing to his father about it.

Two or three days after the first run to the island he and Halpine went again, the weather being very boisterous, and, with his father at his side to help him if necessary, Harry took the helm and carried the vessel safely through all the perilous passages, till she rode at ease on the bosom of the land-locked lake.

"Why can't a boat get in at other points?" asked Harry. "For instance, there is a passage between Island No. 18 and the main."

"M'm! that is one of the Quacks. Beware of it. The channel is full of sunken rocks."

"Why not between Island No. 12 and the main, then?"

"Another Quack Doctor. The passage there is too narrow, and if a boat should attempt it, it could not get beyond the Bald Doctor on account of the current."

"Why can't you go between 2 and 19, then?"

"Because of the narrowness of the channel and the presence of protecting shoals. There is but one way to reach the island, and that is known to you and myself alone."

Harry noted all these things on his chart, but nothing more

was said, the stay at the island being short, Halpine making some excuse for not landing, although Harry would have been glad to do so.

He did not see May for some days, but he knew from Nat that Guy Darcy had not been there on account of his black eyes, and that was some comfort.

Notwithstanding the fact that the schooner of the smuggler was said to be in the neighborhood, the revenue officers had not seen it, and as Halpine went about his business as usual, people began to think they had treated him unjustly, particularly when he offered to give them all the aid in his power, even to chasing the schooner as soon as she should appear.

A day or so after this, as Harry and Nat were cruising along shore in a small boat, they suddenly heard screams, and glancing toward shore, beheld a stalwart fisherman hurrying toward a nook in the rocks with a young girl in his arms.

"It's May!" cried Harry, sculling toward the rocks.

"In the arms of Jan the smuggler," added Nat. "What is the villain about to do?"

"Save me, save me!" screamed the poor girl.

Her screams were stifled by the hand of the ruffian, who now heard Harry's shout and hurried toward the rocks with all his speed.

A moment later the boat grated on the sands, and Harry leaped ashore.

"Release her, you villain!" he cried to Jan, who was known as one of the worst characters on the coast.

The man glared angrily at Harry, drew an ugly looking knife and awaited the attack with sullen silence.

With a cry of rage Harry sprang upon him, and with no other weapon than his bare fist, struck the man a terrible blow in the face.

Jan uttered a hoarse cry and aimed a blow at Harry, but the latter was as quick as lightning and dodged the blow, at the same time closing with the brawny scoundrel and felling him to the earth.

Jan released his hold on the girl, who sprang into Harry's arms and clung frantically to him.

"Away!" cried Nat from the boat. "The ruffians are coming."

A shrill whistle by Jan as he fell had been instantly answered, and now the sound of hurrying footsteps was heard among the rocks.

From many a hidden nook and cranny came half a score of evil-looking ruffians, and Harry feared that his retreat would be cut off.

"To the boat!" yelled Nat.

That was indeed the boy's only chance, and, lifting May in his arms, he beat a hasty retreat.

"After them!" cried Jan. "Capture the young fool! It's the captain's orders. Seize, but don't hurt him."

There were Jock and Pike, Phil, Teddy, Sol Shrimp, and Tim Bucket, all notorious scoundrels, and a few others not so well-known, and these now gave chase.

Down to the water's edge ran the boy, leaped into the boat, placed his charge upon one of the thwarts, seized an oar, and shoved off just as Jock rushed into the water up to his knees.

In another moment the man, who was a veritable giant, would have seized the gunwale of the boat, but at that instant Harry raised his oar and struck the ruffian on the head with the blade.

Tim Bucket was close behind with a boat-hook in his hand, and about to throw it over the gunwale, but Jock fell against him, and both rolled over into the water.

"Shoot the young imp!" roared Jan. "I'll get even with him, no matter what are the captain's orders."

Sol Shrimp, a little man with a big head and a vicious look, unstrung a short carbine from his shoulder, quickly threw it into position and took aim.

Harry and Nat were standing up in the boat, paddling vigorously, and were both excellent marks for the shots of the ruffians on shore.

At that moment, so fraught with peril, May suddenly sprang up, darted past the two young men, and stood on the stern thwart, crying out:

"Shoot, you cowards, but remember it is my life you take, not his."

As she stood there her lovely form covered the boys and protected them from the shots of the smugglers.

"Put down your weapon," roared Jan, striking Sol's carbine down. "Would you kill the girl?"

"For God's sake come away," cried Harry, dropping his oar and springing aft to where May stood, defiant and beautiful. "A chance shot would take you from me forever."

"No, no, not till you are safe," cried May, retaining her position.

Nat had by this time seized both oars, and was pulling with all his might, so that in a few moments they were out of range of any shots the smugglers might send after them.

May then threw her arms about Harry's neck, and as he placed her on the thwart, sobbed:

"Oh, Harry, I would have given my life to save yours."

"I know it, darling, but the sacrifice is too great."

The ruffians now disappeared, seeking a retreat among the rocks, and the two young fellows rowed to the little wharf further down the shore, where vessels usually landed, and here Harry took charge of May, promising to take her home.

"How did it happen?" he asked, referring to her being in the power of the smuggler.

"We were walking along shore, Guy Darcy and I, when two ruffians sprang out from behind some rocks, and the one called Jan seized me in his arms."

"And Darcy? What did he do?"

"Ran away," laughed May, for now that the danger was over, she could afford to be merry over the affair.

"A pretty escort, truly," cried Harry. "I wonder he is not ashamed to show his face in the place."

The affair was not yet over, however, as Harry quickly discovered, for as they were proceeding along the straggling street which ran through the town and led at last to Gen. Ainsworth's elegant residence, they saw a carriage rapidly approaching, and as it reached them it suddenly stopped, and the general himself sprang out.

"So—so, you young ruffian," he cried. "You want to abduct my ward, do you, after being denied admission to my house? I know all about this affair. Release that young lady at once, and the sooner you leave town the better."

"Oh, uncle, you are cruel," cried May. "Harry has just bravely rescued me from a dozen of the worst men in the town. He risked his life to save me."

"Oh, yes, he has a pretty story ready, I don't doubt," sneered the general. "That's only a part of his plot."

"Plot!" cried Harry, the hot blood rushing to his temples.

"Yes, plot, you impudent young braggart," roared the irate guardian in great rage. "Young Darcy saw the whole affair—the sham rescue, the mock fight, the cut-and-dried escape and all. Your clever little plot won't work, sir."

"If you prefer to take that puppy's word rather than mine," said Harry, as he turned away, "I have nothing more to say. I do not care to argue the matter before a pig-headed old fool who won't listen to reason."

"Pig-headed old fool, am I, you saucy young jackanapes?" howled the general. "I'll teach you manners, sir, hang me if I don't."

But May now interposed and said, quietly:

"You have bitterly wronged and insulted a noble fellow, guardy, and if he forgets himself it is your own fault: I would rather have him than a dozen like Guy Darcy, who not

only runs away in time of danger, but also utters falsehoods to cover up his cowardice."

"You'll marry him, all the same," roared the general, and then one of the servants assisted May to enter the carriage, and she and her irascible guardian, still smarting under Harry's well-merited rebuke, were then driven away.

As for Harry, he sought out Nat, who by this time had spread the news of his chum's gallant conduct far and wide, and together they went to Harry's house to spend the evening.

Many a word of praise was given the young fellow, while all blamed Gen. Ainsworth for his harshness, Sergeant Sumner declaring that he had been mistaken in both Harry and his father, but that now he considered them both his friends, and would not hear a word against them.

Jan and Jock and their evil associates were not seen in town after the story of their villainy got about, and it would have gone hard with them if they had been, for the fickle crowd was now on Harry's side, and vowed vengeance to all who sought to injure him.

The next day, however, a great sensation was created.

It was said that both Harry and May had disappeared, and that he had taken the young lady away in spite of her guardian's watchfulness.

It was also made known that the smuggling schooner had appeared, and that Halpine had taken his own vessel, and, with the revenue officers and a troop of militia on board, was now in pursuit of her.

"Halpine is a trump, after all," cried the villagers.

"And so is Harry," cried Nat and others, "and I don't believe a word of what you lubbers say against him."

But Mrs. Bounnee, the fisherman's housekeeper, heard all and said nothing, only muttering to herself:

"They haven't got anywhere near the truth, any of them. If I chose to open my mouth I could tell 'em something that would take their breath away."

CHAPTER IV.

THE RACE TO THE ISLAND.

The mantle of night rested on all things, and the little town of Sea Cliff lay in darkness and in silence, the waves lapping its sea-girt shores, and the gentle wind whispering about the eaves of the houses.

Harry Halpine lay soundly sleeping after the exciting incidents of the day, but awoke suddenly as a cold hand was placed upon his forehead.

"Who is there?" he cried, starting up in bed.

"It is I. There is business to be done."

"What is it, father?" asked Harry, getting up, having recognized Halpine's voice.

"I want you to steer my vessel among the Twenty Doctors' rocks."

"What! at night?" Harry gasped. "I would not dare."

"No, no, by daylight. You must first go and meet her. You will be chased, and you may see me among the revenue men, but you need fear nothing. We must keep up appearances."

Harry was dressed by this time, being rapid in all his movements, and Halpine now said:

"Take the boat and row along the shore until you see a red light, and then display one yourself. There is a lantern in the boat. You will then be taken on board the schooner, when you will deliver this packet."

Halpine placed an envelope in his son's hand, and continued:

"When the sun comes up run for the Doctors, and when

once in the lake wait for further instructions, but do not go ashore."

"This is some smuggling business, is it not?" cried Harry. "Were you not my father I would not——"

"Time presses," murmured Halpine. "You must be off."

Putting the packet in a secure place, Harry hurriedly left the house, went to the shore, where he found the boat, and stepping in, took up the oars and rowed rapidly away.

His own lantern was burning in the bottom of the boat, as a red reflection on the thwarts showed, and as he rowed he looked for that other red light which he was told he would see.

It was nearly an hour, however, and the first faint gray of the coming day was seen in the east before he suddenly saw a red light on a rock ahead of him.

He took up a lantern and held it above his head, and at once the first light disappeared.

A moment afterward a little skiff shot out from a hidden cove among the rocks, and as it came near a man asked:

"Where is the captain?"

"He bade me give you this," and Harry delivered the packet intrusted to him.

"Follow us," said the man, and the smaller boat glided around a point of rock, where Harry presently caught sight of a large schooner lying at anchor.

All hands went aboard, the boats being hauled up, and Jan, who was the leader, took Harry into the cabin, where, by the light of a hanging lamp, he examined the packet given him.

"What!" he cried, "you are to take the schooner past Twenty Doctors' rocks? What folly!"

"Does the captain say so?"

"Yes, but——"

"That is sufficient. We start at sunrise. Until we reach the lake I am in command."

"A mere boy take the vessel through that awful passage!" muttered Jan. "It is more than I would do myself."

Here Jock and Pike came down the companion, the former saying:

"Doesn't Capt. Dash take the schooner through?"

"No, this boy does."

"It'll be death to us, then!" cried Pike. "I refuse to go."

"And I!" cried Jan.

"Do as I bid you!" cried Harry, sternly. "The vessel sails at sunrise. Your captain must deceive the officers, and will pretend to follow us. Let me hear no more. For the present I command here."

He spoke so resolutely that Jan saw at once that he was determined to be obeyed, and he therefore made a sign to the others to withdraw.

When they had gone Harry looked around him and said:

"There is yet more than an hour to sunrise. I wish to rest, but be sure that you call me the instant the sun appears, and not a moment later, at your peril."

Harry then turned toward the door of what seemed to be the chief cabin, and putting his hand upon the knob, found it locked upon the inside.

"What does this mean?" he asked.

"Captain Dash's room, sir," answered Jan, uneasily. "He always keeps it locked when not here, and carries the key himself."

There was a certain indefinable manner about the man that showed Harry that he was concealing something, and, opening the door next to the one he had tried, he found a small, neat stateroom, and throwing off only his boots and coat, he stretched himself out upon the bed and was soon fast asleep.

"If he had been more curious the door would have had to be opened," muttered Jan to Jock, as he met the latter on

deck. "I reckon he wants that pretty bird for himself, for I've seen 'em together often."

"Yes, and we'd better not have carried her away, particularly now that the young one is here instead of the captain as we expected."

"Do you dare trust him?" asked Phil, another of the smugglers.

"The captain says most positive that we're to obey the youngster, and I suppose he knows; but I must say I never expect to see the camp to-day, and it's an even thing if our fine cargo isn't scattered among the Doctors, and we sunk to the bottom of the channel."

Harry was suddenly awakened from a sound sleep by a heavy rap upon his door, and getting up at once put on his coat and boots and went on deck.

The upper rim of the sun was just appearing above the horizon, and as he saw it the young fellow smiled and cried, authoritatively:

"Up with the mudhooks! Make sail and away. Take the wheel, some one, until I am ready to do so."

Before the sun, all red and glowing, had left its watery bed, the schooner was dashing over the waves in the direction of the town, with all sail set upon a tack which insured the greatest possible speed.

Upon passing the town a gun was heard, and in a short time the greatest confusion was seen to be taking place.

"They have seen us," cried Jan, "and are in pursuit. See! there comes the revenue boat."

A small, swift schooner was now seen to be getting up sail with all speed, and in a few moments was hurrying after the smuggler, a shot being sent after the latter as a signal that she should lie to.

"Give me a glass!" cried Harry.

A powerful telescope was handed him, and he quickly scanned the pursuer from stem to stern.

"Yes, my father is at the helm," he muttered. "So far, then, everything works well."

Away went both vessels on the wind, and before long it was seen that the pursuer was the faster, and that in a long chase she could easily overhaul the smuggler.

Jan began to show signs of impatience, which were quickly communicated to the crew, and before long expressions of dissatisfaction were heard on all sides.

"Silence!" thundered Harry, springing upon the quarter-deck. "The first man who dares to speak without leave or answer orders shall be put in irons and thrown overboard. All you have to do is to obey!"

Half an hour later the schooner was headed directly for the Island of Twenty Doctors, the pursuer having gained considerably in the meantime.

Harry now went to the wheel, and as he struck into the first of the current running between the two islands, held his course north by east until the white rock appeared on the end of the Crooked Doctor, when he turned sharply and sped for the Quacks, the men looking on with apprehension.

Sail was now taken in to a considerable extent, the orders being given sharply and obeyed with alacrity, for a pistol lay on the binnacle top, right in front of the young commander, and the men felt sure that he would use it if they relaxed in their duty.

It was a trying time to Harry when, having cleared the Quacks and the Red Head, he held his course straight for the Good Doctor, the treacherous strand of the Bald Head close on his right, for to make a false move now meant destruction.

He did not dare look behind to see what progress the chaser was making, but, when reaching the eddy near the Good Doctor, turned sharply to the northeast and kept a good lookout for the mark on the bluff.

The very moment it came full in sight he headed quickly to the north, and then it disappeared, hidden by the irregularities of the rock.

All danger was now past, and with the greatest sense of relief he turned to see where the chaser was.

She had followed the schooner as far as the Round Doctor, and had then become caught in a contrary current which swiftly carried her out to sea again.

In a few minutes the cleft of the bluff was reached, and before long the schooner lay at anchor in the placid lake, shielded by the green hills and frowning bluffs of Smuggler's island.

"Hurrah for our young captain!" cried Jan, as Harry stepped on the quarter-deck from the wheelhouse.

"We can trust him to the death!" roared Jock. "Hurrah for our young captain!"

"Hurrah!" yelled all hands, but Harry, sick at heart, turned away, and entering the cabin, said huskily:

"Oh, God, what a fate! Better that I had died when a child than to live to see this bitter hour!"

CHAPTER V.

STRANGE REVELATIONS.—HARRY'S DETERMINATION.

Upon the arrival of the smugglers at the island the cargo was at once landed, the vessel being brought up nearer the beach, and here Harry had an opportunity to study the island more than he had done on his first visit.

He did not go ashore, but he could see a number of huts, which were the quarters of the men, and not far away a larger and more pretentious dwelling, which was occupied by the captain himself.

On the right hand side of the lake, as one entered, half hidden among the trees, were several storehouses and a building used as a powder magazine, it being necessary to cross the beach in going from the tents to the storehouses.

Harry noted these things upon his chart, upon which he also marked the exact course to be taken in gaining the lake, and that by which the open sea was regained, this latter being different from the course taken in entering among the islands.

After the cargo had been landed from the schooner, a task of some hours, there being nothing to do now except to wait for the appearance of the captain, time began to hang heavily on Harry's hands, and he scarcely knew how to employ himself.

He went into the cabin and occupied the time by reading some books which he found in a small swinging cupboard, and while thus engaged he heard a hail from without.

Hurrying to the deck, he saw that a little yacht had just come into the lake, and in the standing room aft was his own father.

In fact, it was his yacht that the captain had taken, and the man now called out:

"Lower a boat and come aboard."

In a few minutes Harry was aboard the yacht, when Halpine said to him:

"You must now return to Sea Cliff. You have been fishing since early morning and have just returned. You may not see me for a day or so."

Harry then saw his father enter the boat and row ashore, and then he hoisted sail, put about, and entered the lake.

In leaving the island the course was first between the large, mitten-shaped island and one of the smaller ones to the right of it on that tack, both being Quacks and exceeding dangerous to pass.

Then the course was very nearly straight until the first of the Seven Fat Doctors was reached, this being rounded and the yacht passing to the northward of the next, and then making straight for the Little Doctor, but passing close to the Crooked Doctor so as to avoid the current by which he entered the group of islands.

"Twenty Doctors haven't my case to attend to yet," muttered Harry, when he was at last safely at sea, "but it makes me nervous every time I go near them. I must accustom myself to going in and out, for I do not know when an emergency might arise."

In the course of an hour or so the young man landed at the little wharf at Sea Cliff, and, leaving his yacht, started for the house.

He presently met Nat, who said to him, rather excitedly, Harry thought:

"Hello! Where have you been all morning?"

"Fishing. I've got a nice lot in the lockers of my yacht," and this was so, as Harry had ascertained after leaving the island.

"Then you haven't heard the news?"

"No; what is it?"

"May has been carried off!"

"What!" and Harry grew faint.

"She was taken away some time in the night, and they say that you know where she is."

"Who says so?" demanded the other, hotly.

"The general, and Darcy, and some others. They say you have concealed her somewhere along the coast, and that you intend to keep her until she promises to be your wife."

"It is false! I knew nothing of this until now. If she has been carried away I will be the first one to go in search of her."

"Did you know that your father went in pursuit of the smugglers, and that they got away by the aid of Twenty Doctors?"

"When was this?"

"Only this morning."

"And where is father now?"

"Still in pursuit of 'em, I think, though Sumner and the revenue men have returned."

Harry knew, therefore, that his father's real part in the matter of the smugglers was not known, and this made it easier for him to undertake the next important business on hand.

"Have they no clew to May's whereabouts?" he asked.

"None. Some one entered a window during the night and carried her off. She evidently did not go willingly, for the room was in confusion, and there were evidences of a struggle, although no cries were heard. There was also a smell of chloroform, and in one corner a handkerchief soaked with the drug was found."

"And it's very likely that I would come back after doing all this, is it not?" cried Harry, "or that I would take her away at all by force, when she would have gone willingly, had I asked her?"

"I don't believe it, of course," protested Nat, "but you will have to face those who do, and explain what seems so strange."

"I will do nothing of the kind. My own past conduct is sufficient warrant for believing me innocent of this outrage."

"But what shall you do?"

"Begin a search for her at once. Will you go with me?"

"Yes."

"Then meet at the wharf in an hour," and Harry hurried off to the house.

There was no one there but Mrs. Bounce, and when she saw Harry she said, wrathfully:

"So, so, you are getting to be as big a rascal as your father, are you? Couldn't you have waited, instead of abducting the young woman by force in the dead of the night?"

"What do you mean? I am in search of the young lady myself. Do you know where she is?"

"Not I, but your confederates do, I suppose. Of course you didn't do it, but you know who did, under your instructions."

"By Heaven, I know now!" cried the boy. "Jan and Jock and those villains tried this once before and I thwarted them."

The housekeeper looked fixedly at the young man, and asked, pointedly:

"Do you mean to tell me you know nothing about this?"

"I swear it!"

"And I believe you," said the woman, after a pause. "Well, it was Jan and Jock who did it, but I wonder you did not see her, since you have been aboard the vessel."

"The vessel! Ah, all is explained. The locked cabin—the wish of the men to keep me from it. All is clear. She was a prisoner there, and I did not know."

"You have never been ashore on the island?" asked Mrs. Bounce, after a period of silence.

"No."

"Then I advise you to go there as soon as possible and examine the house where the captain lives."

"Will May be there?"

"Perhaps, but there will be some one of more importance than the young lady."

"And that is——"

"Your mother."

"My mother!" echoed Harry. "She is dead."

"Dead to the world, yes, but not otherwise. She has been kept a prisoner on the island for many years."

"Why?"

"Because she knows your father's secrets and loathes his unlawful trade. When, years ago, he learned of the passage through the Twenty Doctors, she feared that he would use the secret for an evil purpose."

"He was an honest man before?"

"Yes, but a poor one. She begged him to forget what he had discovered, but in his rage he struck her down, and then she cursed the place and him, too, if he followed his evil bent."

"Yes, yes, and what followed?"

"He sought to reach the island, succeeded, engaged in smuggling, hid his ill-gotten gold on its shores, and then, one stormy day, when you were still a child, carried your mother to the island, and there she has remained ever since."

"And I am bound to such a man!" hissed the youth. "Do I not owe more to my mother than to him? By all I love, she shall be released!"

"Then your father's name is blasted, for she has been thought dead for years. Would May Maxwell marry the son of Captain Dash, the smuggler?"

"She will marry me for what I am, not what my father is. My mother must be released. To think of her being a prisoner on that wretched island all these years!"

"Why should you love her more than the father that you have always known?"

"Because she is my mother!" cried Harry, fiercely. "Because she gave me birth and tended me in my helplessness. What can be greater than the love for a mother?"

"Humph!" was all that Mrs. Bounce would vouchsafe to answer.

Harry now took a hurried meal, for he had eaten nothing since the night before, made a few changes in his raiment, saw that his pistol was in his pocket, and then set off for the wharf where he was to meet Nat.

He found the latter waiting for him, and without a word he sprang aboard and began making preparations for instant departure.

Nat assisted him, but not a word was said until they had left the wharf and were under way.

"Do you know where you are going?" asked Nat?"

"Yes."

"Then you have a clew?"

"Yes."

"A good one?"

"The very best."

"You know where she has been taken by the scoundrels?"

"Yes."

"Well, you are sparing words, at all events," muttered Nat, somewhat nettled at these short answers.

"Forgive me, Nat," said Harry, "but you don't know how great my excitement is. If I could tell you, all would be clear."

"You can at least tell me where you are going, can't you, old fellow?"

The answer caused Nat the utmost surprise.

"To the Smuggler's island."

"To attempt to reach it is death."

The answer caused Nat still greater surprise.

"Not when one knows the passage, and I know it, and have taken a vessel through it."

CHAPTER VI.

THE WOMAN OF THE ISLAND—MAY'S PERIL.

After Harry had left the island his father went ashore, and after looking over the storehouses and seeing what had been done, proceeded by way of the beach to his house on the other side of the lake.

Sitting in front of the house in the sun was a woman, still beautiful, despite the traces of suffering on her face, who arose as Halpine approached, and said:

"Harry has been here. You have taught him how to run the channel, and now I suppose he will follow in your footsteps."

"He has been here!" cried Halpine, his brow darkening. "I told him not to go ashore."

"He has not been, but I knew he was there by what the men said. Do you intend to blight that innocent boy's life as you have blighted your own and mine?" she asked, fiercely.

"Why should you care? He is not your son."

"I nursed him as an infant, I cared for him as only a mother can care for her children. The sea gave him to me, and he is mine, and I warn you how you mislead him."

"What difference can it make?" laughed the smuggler. "If his father had lived he would have been a smuggler and a pirate, just the same. I learned the secret of the island

—
 "And used it for evil purposes against my solemn warning. The place is accursed."

"Pshaw! You are at your old tricks again! Here I am, rich and respected, and you said years ago that I would die a dishonored death."

"Your doom will come sooner or later!" cried the woman, raising one hand aloft, "and through this very boy whom you are seeking to lead into evil paths."

Muttering an imprecation upon the woman, Halpine strode angrily away and presently rowed over to the schooner and went aboard.

Finding his stateroom locked, he demanded angrily why

this had been done, and Jan, handing him the key, said, apologetically:

"The young master wished to use the room as a cage for his pretty bird, sir, and went away without letting her out. I supposed you knew all about it."

"All about what?" stormed the captain, as he turned the key in the lock and swung open the door.

On the bed lay a lovely girl whom he knew to be May Maxwell, evidently just awaking from a sleep.

"What does this mean?" she cried.

"The young captain took her with him when he left town," explained the villain. "I suppose he thought the island would be the best place in the world to keep her."

"So, so, he needs no lessons in evil from me, then," muttered Halpine. "The young rover is a bold one," and he laughed boisterously. "He is his father over again, despite the wailings of that foolish woman yonder. Blood will tell, after all, be it good or bad."

May now sprang to the door and cried, eagerly:

"Ah, Mr. Halpine, you are my Harry's father, and can feel his distress at finding me gone. How did I come here, and what place is this? Who are these men? You will take me home, will you not?"

"We had better speak to the boy first," laughed Halpine. "He brought you here, and I presume he has his own plans in regard to the disposition he intends to make of you."

"It is false! These men are smugglers; they tried to carry me off once before, and he rescued me. The men who broke into my room were evil looking fellows, with great beards and coarse voices. There is one now!" and May pointed to Jock, who stood outside.

"Oh, that's true enough," laughed the young man, "but we only obeyed the young captain's orders. He wasn't ready to receive you the other day, or we'd have carried you off safe enough, and then a rescue looked very well, and that's why he done it."

Poor May sank into a cushioned chair just within the room, and buried her face in her hands, while the bitter tears coursed down her cheeks.

If Harry had proved false, whom then could she trust?

"Take her ashore," said Halpine. "She and the other woman can console each other. I must run the schooner out to-night and get rid of some of the stuff we have secured."

"Come on, my young lady," said Jan, putting a hand on the poor girl's arm, "I'll show you to a nice house on shore what's much better than this rough vessel, and to-morrow your handsome lover will come, and then you will be as happy as two dickle birds."

But May suddenly sprang to her feet, dashed past the smuggler, threw Halpine aside as if he had been a mere child, and hastened toward the companionway.

In an instant she had reached the deck. The smuggler captain and his men were in full pursuit.

"If he is false to me," she cried, "there is but one course left!"

"What would you do?" cried Halpine, hoarsely, as the poor girl sprang to the side of the vessel.

"End my wretched life!" and clutching the shrouds, she sprang upon the rail.

"Stop her!" cried Halpine.

Too late!

In an instant she had leaped into the waters of the lake.

"My God, the shark! Save her!" roared Halpine, rushing to the bow, where the little boat was towing by a long line.

As he spoke the sharp, black fin of a shark was seen cutting the smooth waters of the lake.

In another instant the unhappy girl arose to the surface.

Drawing the boat alongside by a quick movement, Halpine cast off the line and quickly lowered himself over the side.

Springing into the boat, he seized an oar and sculled rapidly toward the spot where May was struggling in the water.

The race between him and the shark seemed to be an even one.

The monster had long infested the lake, and was the terror of the smugglers, who had not been able by any means to rid these placid waters of his presence.

More than one man had already fallen a victim to this sea-demon, and the poor girl seemed now likely to still further swell the number.

"Her innocent blood must not be shed," murmured the captain as he propelled the little boat with lightning speed through the water.

The race between him and the shark seemed to be an even one.

"The young fool must have been mad to bring her to this place."

The boat and the shark reached the poor girl's side at the same instant.

As the rapacious creature turned on his back to seize his prey, however, Halpine thrust the blade of his oar deep into the monster's cruel jaws.

The sharp teeth crashed clean through and through, and a good half fathom of the oar was cut off as though severed by a knife.

The shark dove, and in an instant Halpine reached over the side and drew the now unconscious girl into the boat.

As he did so the shark again appeared and made a savage rush at the line towing astern, severing it in a second.

"Curse the brute!" hissed Halpine, "he must be gotten rid of or there will be no safety for any of us. I believe the creature is influenced by my wife, who never ceases to bestow her maledictions upon me and the island."

The monster now sought the depths of the lake, and Halpine, throwing away the useless oar, laid his precious charge upon a thwart, and picking up a good oar, quickly sent the boat ashore, springing out as it grated on the sands.

Raising the girl in his arms, he hurried along the beach and through the shrubbery till he reached the house where he lived when on the island.

"The young lady has fallen into the lake and been nearly devoured by your pet," he said, savagely, as he placed May upon a bench and turned aside toward his wife.

"Who is she?"

"Ask no questions until she is safe from danger," was the angry response. "See what your curses result in. I am safe, while this innocent girl nearly loses her life."

The woman carried May into an inner room, and in the course of ten minutes returned.

"Well?" demanded the captain.

"She has recovered and is resting quietly. She seems greatly distressed in mind. Who is she?"

"Harry's sweetheart. He carried her away last night. The boy you feared I would contaminate has entered, unaided, it seems, upon evil paths.

"I will not believe it," cried the woman, stoutly. "I know that my prayers have kept him what he will always be, an honest man."

"Think what you like," muttered Halpine, with indifference. "The girl is his sweetheart, and whether he brought her here or not, she must not suffer."

"She shall not, for I know she is pure and noble."

CHAPTER VII.

AN ACCIDENT—ASHORE ON BALD HEAD.

We left Harry and Nat on their way to the smuggler's island with the purpose of rescuing May from her abductors. Nat

was very much surprised to learn that Harry knew the channel through the Twenty Doctors, and asked him how he had discovered it.

"That I cannot tell you now," returned Harry, "but some time I may do so. Ask me no more at present."

Nat was very much puzzled, of course, but he respected Harry's secret, whatever it might be, and said no more on the subject.

The little vessel sped over the waters like a bird, and before long the mysterious island of the smugglers came in sight, with its forbidding bluffs, its foaming waters, and its twenty grim sentinels, who so long had guarded the entrance to the calm waters of the lake hidden among its hills.

The sky had clouded up since morning, and the wind now blew in fitful gusts, giving promise of ugly weather before nightfall.

"It looks mighty dangerous," muttered Nat, as he gazed on the group of islands and saw how the water surged around them.

"And so it is, but I have a duty to perform, and all the dangers in the world would not keep me back."

Blacker grew sea and sky, louder howled the winds, whiter grew the surging waves dashing on the rocks, until it seemed as if all the elements had conspired together to prevent the brave boy from accomplishing what he had undertaken.

"Put back, Harry," said Nat, frightened in spite of himself, and he was naturally brave.

"No, no, I must not."

"Even the smugglers themselves will not leave at such a time," persisted Nat, "and May is safe enough. If we lose our lives now we can do her no good."

"But I know the passage, and have made it a half dozen times, and have a chart to guide me by."

"But you have never made it in such weather as this. The slightest variation may be fatal, and with such a wind and tide we can't handle the vessel as rapidly as in calmer weather."

"I know you are brave, Nat," said Harry, impressively, "and would not shrink from ordinary perils. I also know that the danger of running this difficult channel is greater than at any other time that I have made it, but I know, too, that my darling is with these villains, and I dread the worst."

"They say Captain Dash never harms women, no matter how bad he may be otherwise. Let us lie to until to-morrow. It will be dark by the time you reach the island, and the return will be more dangerous, perhaps impossible. Besides, who knows that the smugglers are not there now? How can we two hope to engage successfully with a score of those men?"

"Nat, I must tell you all," said Harry. "But you must swear never to repeat what I tell you till I give you permission."

"I swear it, Harry, for you are my friend, and I would keep your secrets as I would my own."

"Then know that Captain Dash is my father, known to you as Halpine, and in going to this island I run no danger except from the treacherous Twenty Doctors."

"Capt. Dash your father?" and Nat's astonishment now knew no bounds.

"Yes, and I piloted the smuggling schooner through the channel this morning when she was pursued by the government vessel. I know that May is on the island, and I must protect her at all hazards. From my father I have nothing to fear, but from his lawless crew much."

Nat was silent, and, as they were now running straight for the channel between the Little Doctor and the Crooked, Harry said gravely:

"Stand by to obey my orders on the instant, and don't lose your head as you value life."

"Ay—ay, Harry! If you say you know the channel, that is sufficient."

Into the channel shot the yacht, rounding the Little Doctor, and then heading for the Seven Fat Doctors, passing the third one and running along the low, rocky shores of the Red-Headed Doctor with its high central peak frowning down upon them.

As they reached the point Nat pointed ahead with a look of alarm on his face, but Harry had already seen what had caused the look, and became more determined than ever.

The smuggling schooner was approaching on the outward passage, and was then bearing straight for the first of the Fat Doctors, or Island No. 5 on Harry's chart.

As the yacht began to round the point of the Red Head the schooner swept up and the two vessels were not more than four fathoms apart.

Capt. Dash appeared on the quarterdeck, trumpet in hand, and shouted:

"Put back at once!"

"Not till I have taken my sweetheart from the island," answered the young man, in shrill tones, which could be heard above the roar of winds and waters.

Captain Dash sprang to the wheel, where his presence could not be longer dispensed with, and as the vessels began to part company, roared out in stentorian tones.

"She is aboard this vessel! Put back, I say."

"I will trust to my own sight sooner than to his word," muttered Harry, as the yacht flew around the point under short sail and sped on toward the Bald Head, with the dangerous Quack on the port side.

On they flew toward the Bald Doctor, Harry keeping a sharp lookout so as to tack the instant that the Round Doctor and the Good Doctor bore directly in line.

"Let go the jib sheet!" he yelled to Nat, as the two islands ranged in a straight line, at the same time jamming the tiller to starboard.

Nat obeyed, but a sudden flaw of wind yanked the sheet from his hand, and the boom of the mainsail swinging around with a snap, the unlucky fellow was knocked senseless to the deck.

Harry made a grab for the main sheet, which had been torn from his hand by the sudden jibbing of the sail, and, quickly bringing the tiller to the proper position, dashed forward to secure the flapping jib.

The tiller could look out for itself for an instant, but the jib must be attended to at once.

Nat still lay on deck unconscious, and in another moment Harry had seized the jib sheet, drawn it home and made fast.

Then he hurried back to his position aft, for the yacht had turned and was in a most dangerous situation.

She had gone too far toward the Bald Doctor, and the two smaller islands were not in a line with her, as they should have been.

In another instant a fierce current running past the Bald Head had seized the yacht, and was bearing her toward its dangerous shores.

Harry let go his sheet, put the helm aport, and tried to regain what he had lost.

It was too late.

He was in the full sweep of the current, and his efforts only served to swing the vessel's head a point to port, when the current took her broadside on and turned her toward the narrow strip of beach which lined the island at one point.

Otherwise she would have headed directly for the rocks.

Determined to make the best of it, Harry kept her head toward the beach, and in a few moments she struck and dashed well up on the shore.

Harry was thrown down, but he speedily leaped to his feet, seized a warp, dashed on shore, and made it fast to a dwarf tree close at hand.

Then he hurried back to the yacht, leaped aboard, lifted Nat in his arms, bore him ashore, placing him on the soft grass out of the way of the dashing surf.

"If we could have cleared the Bald Head and struck that outward current," muttered Harry, "we could have made the open sea well enough and been clear of all the Doctors, and at liberty to get away or try again, but now I'm in a bad fix, I'm afraid."

The yacht was in no immediate danger, though Harry saw that she had staved a hole in her bows, which would have to be patched up before she would float, even if she were gotten off, and this latter was an undertaking in itself.

"I'd better have taken old Nat's advice, after all," mused the young fellow, "though this thing might not happen again in a hundred years. Well, I'm not dead yet, at all events, and it'll take more than Twenty Doctors to kill me, I can tell them."

CHAPTER VIII.

ADVENTURES ON THE BALD DOCTOR—THE ESCAPE.

The island of the Bald Doctor, upon which Harry had been cast, was the largest, in point of area, of the whole group of twenty, its shape being more regular than some which might be of greater length, so that in square feet it would average more than those which at first sight would appear to be larger.

It took its name from a high round peak in its center, perfectly devoid of vegetation, and as bare and white as an egg; but from this it must not be inferred that the island was but a mass of barren rocks.

On the contrary, there was a little grove of trees, a considerable stretch of grassy meadow-land, a romantic ravine, through which ran a brawling stream, and bit of woods where there was a spring of clear, cold water.

"We must have a fire the first thing," thought Harry, and in his search for the materials therefor made the discovery that the island was not the barren wilderness he had supposed it.

Collecting a large number of dry twigs, and making a pile of them on a flat rock in a sheltered nook, he next got a number of heavier sticks, and dragged an old dead log some distance, putting it at the back of his improvised fireplace, which he built of loose round stones.

He soon had a fire blazing merrily, and adding enough wood to keep it burning for some time, hurried on board the yacht, got a big tin dipper and went off to the spring, where he filled it, returned to the camp, and bathed Nat's head and face, the young fellow being then in a semi-conscious condition.

He soon revived, and sitting up, asked faintly:

"Are we on the island?"

"Not on the main island, old chap, but on one of the Doctors—the one they call the Bald Head. Do you feel any pain?"

"Not much. How is the yacht?"

"She will need patching some."

"Then she was not wrecked?"

"No."

"I'm glad of that, for it was all my fault that we got here. I should have been more cautious."

"Never mind that old man, since you are alive and have no broken bones. We'll have to stay here all night, so we might as well make ourselves as comfortable as possible."

"Can't we stay aboard the yacht?"

"We might, though she lies pretty well on her side, and we

wouldn't be altogether comfortable. However, if it should come on to rain we will do so."

There was a small supply of provisions on board, and Harry prepared supper, making coffee, broiling some bacon, roasting potatoes and toasting crackers, turning his attention between times to cutting a number of hemlock and pine branches, and making a soft bed in a sheltered spot for himself and Nat.

After supper it soon grew dark, and but for the fire it would have been cheerless enough on that lonely island.

As the night advanced the tempest increased, and at last the pattering rain-drops and the hissing of the fire told the boys that their out-of-door camp would not be as comfortable as the little cabin of the yacht.

Harry covered up the fire so that it might not spread and do damage during the night, and then he assisted Nat to reach the yacht, for the young fellow limped painfully and could not walk alone.

Once aboard, Nat bathed his foot and ankle in cold water, and Harry rubbed them with some liniment he had on board, having a small store of such things put away in a locker, to be used as occasion demanded, and then, after seeing that everything was snug, both boys turned in for a comfortable nap after the exciting adventures of the day.

The rain presently came down in torrents, but Harry had secured the door, and the skylights were too tight to admit the rain, so that he felt safe enough, as far as keeping dry was concerned, and he soon fell asleep, despite the incessant claps of thunder and the glare of the lightning, which now and then lighted up the cabin as brilliantly as a lamp would have done.

The storm continued throughout the night, and in the morning it was still raining, though not heavily, and everything around had a moist, uncomfortable look.

"This means that we will have to stay in all day, I suppose?" said Nat, looking out upon the dreary scene.

"Not a bit of it. I have a suit of oil-skins in a locker, and we can take turns in wearing them; that is, if you want to go out, though I'd advise you to remain in."

"I haven't any pain now, and I'd rather go out. What are you going to do?"

"I was going to patch up the hole in the bow, but I can't do it in all this rain. I might get ready, though."

Putting on his oil-skin suit and taking a tin pail and the dipper from the little galley forward, Harry set out for a little knot of spruce trees that he had seen the day before, and one of which he now tapped with his knife, inserting a flat stick at an angle in the cut, so as to allow the gum to run into the pail.

He watched the gum run down for some little time and then left the spot, calculating that it would be some hours before the pail would be full.

By noon the sun appeared, and by that time also the tin pail was filled with spruce gum, and, leaving the dipper in its stead, the young captain took it to the yacht, poured its contents in an iron pot, and returned with it to have it filled.

The sun shone brightly late that afternoon, but not early enough to do anything, and Harry and Nat had in the meantime, by aid of blocks, rope, and rollers, made of pieces of the heavier branches of the trees, cut into convenient lengths, hauled the yacht further up the beach, where she could be handled to better advantage.

The next day was warm and pleasant, and Harry put his pot of pitch—now full to the brim—over a rousing fire, and while Nat watched it he went to work preparing the break in the bow for mending.

"It's got to be a temporary job only," he remarked, "and will have to be done over again, so we need not be too particular."

Fixing the broken planks in place as well as could be done, Harry tacked a strip of canvas over the break, and when the

pitch was hot plastered this well, allowing one coat to dry and harden before he put on another, and so continuing until the place was as water-tight as one could wish.

This task occupied fully half a day, and then working at the tackles, the ropes being changed now and then from one tree or rock to another, they drew the yacht along to the extreme edge of the beach, and at a point just reached by high water.

Then they lightened her as much as possible, and by levers made of saplings which Harry cut with his galley ax, pushed her down far enough to enable her to float at high water.

It was in the middle of the afternoon when she floated, and dropping the anchor, they hurried everything on board, and then Harry took the helm, and as Nat raised the sails steered for the southern shore of the island.

The current soon caught them, but Harry knew its general direction, and when he passed the point took his bearings from the Round Doctor, and swept along the south shore of the Bald Doctor, passing through the fifth and sixth of the Fat Doctors—*islands nine and ten on his chart*—and then, catching the full sweep of the outward current, bore rapidly out to sea.

"There!" exclaimed Harry, as the danger was passed, and casting a glance toward the dangerous whirlpool on his left, "it's easy enough to go out that way, but I'd like to see anyone go in without being swamped. The stream runs like a mill race."

"Where are you bound now?" asked Nat.

"I want to get well clear of these wretched Doctors before I do anything else."

"And then?"

"Then?" and Harry paused. "Well, then I am going to strike for the channel again, and this time I intend to make it."

"But consider; two whole days have passed since the last attempt. You don't know that May is still there."

"At all events, I am going to look for her."

CHAPTER IX.

AN INTERRUPTED STORY—FALSEHOODS.

When May recovered after her rescue from the shark by Halpine, she found herself lying on a bed in a simply but neatly-furnished room, evidently in a cottage, while standing by a vine-clad window was a quiet-looking woman, who seemed more like a friend than an enemy.

"What place is this?" she asked.

"The house of Captain Dash on the Smuggler's Island."

"And who are you?"

"An unhappy woman who has not seen the face of one of her sex for many years."

"Why have I been brought here?"

"I know not."

"Do you know the young captain as well as the old one?" asked May, resolved to learn if Harry were really as base as she feared.

"The young captain? There is none," returned the woman. "Captain Dash is the only person in command."

"I mean his son, who I have known as Harry Halpine, and who had me abducted last night and brought me to this place."

"Harry Halpine!" gasped the woman, turning pale. "The son of Halpine, or Captain Dash, whichever you like? A tall young man, about eighteen, handsome and lovable?"

"That is he!"

"And he brought you here?"

"So his father says. I heard the men cheer him and call him the young master."

"You did not see him?"

"No."

"Did he bring you aboard the vessel himself?"

"No."

"Then his father has lied. Harry Halpine would never do so dastardly a deed."

"Would to Heaven I could think so, for I love him more than life itself; but his presence on board——"

"I know that the young man has been here," said the woman quickly, "and that Halpine has taught him how to run the channel, beset with a hundred dangers; but until within a month, or even less, he has never been here, and has not even yet set foot on the island. Halpine is a wicked man, but Harry is good and noble, and may a curse light upon that man if he seeks to lead him astray."

"Who are you, that you know so much of him?" asked May eagerly.

"Halpine's unhappy wife."

"But Harry's mother is dead."

"Poor boy! I am the only mother he ever knew, and I was torn from him. I have not seen him in many years, but I know he is good, and if you love him he is worthy of your love."

"You have not seen him in many years, you say?"

"No, for my life has been passed on this island, and until now he has never been here. Would that I might see and tell him all."

"All?"

"Yes, for I know that then he would not do that wicked man's bidding. Now, while he believes Halpine to be his father, his sense of duty makes him obey, but——"

"Believes him to be his father?" cried May in great excitement. "And is he not?"

"No; both his parents are dead. He came to us——"

A step was heard on the threshold and the woman suddenly paused.

A moment later a shadow fell across the floor and Halpine entered.

"So, so, you have come to?" he asked. "Have you given her dry clothing?" he continued, turning to the woman.

"Yes."

"Then I have come to take her away. You might get to talking too much. Has she been gossiping?" he asked May.

"No," said the girl bravely, feeling more confidence in the woman than in Halpine. "She has told me nothing."

"Well, you don't want to believe her if she does. You're to stay here till Harry comes back, I suppose, though he went away without leaving me instructions," and the man laughed.

"Then he will return?" cried May, joyfully.

"Oho! you're glad he's coming back, are you?" laughed the other. "You've changed your mind, then? The cold water and that shark have reconciled you to existence?"

May made no reply, and Halpine presently continued:

"Well, you'd better stay on board till he comes, and not be here with this crazy woman. If she should do you any hurt, and she's liable enough to do so at any time, for she's often taken very violently, I'd never forgive myself when Harry came back to have to tell him that you were dead."

"I am not afraid, and I would rather remain here," said May quietly.

"And I'd rather you would not," answered Halpine, roughly, and seizing her by the arm, he dragged the poor girl out of the house, and presently disappeared in the wood.

He did not take May aboard the vessel, but instead conducted her to one of the smaller houses, where he left her to herself, promising that she should have all the attention she wanted.

Then he detailed one of the younger men of his party to see to her wants, ordering him to keep her supplied with food, and to let her have exercise in the wood as often as she wished, but that she was not to go to the beach or be seen by his wife.

Toward night, it being then dark and cloudy, Halpine took the schooner and nearly all his men, and started off to dispose of portions of his cargo.

On the way out he met Harry, much to his surprise, and ordered him back, not having dreamed of seeing him again until his return to Sea Cliff.

When he had gained the open sea he saw that Harry had not followed, but he merely laughed and said:

"Oh, well, let the young fellow go if he likes. He can do no harm. My men have instructions not to allow him to land."

Dismissing the subject as of minor importance, the smuggler turned his attention to the vessel, and really that required all of his care, for a storm was coming, and there were enemies to be guarded against.

He returned the next day, having cleared a good profit on his goods, but, in following the channel, the position of the Bald Doctor was such that he saw nothing of the yacht, nor did the boys happen to see his vessel as he was passing, being occupied in the interior of the island.

He was surprised to learn that Harry had not been there, and presumed that the young man had returned to town.

He reached there himself that night, when Mrs. Bounce informed him that the young master was away.

"When did he go?" he asked.

"Two days ago. It stormed that night."

"And he has not yet returned?" asked Halpine, beginning to feel alarmed.

"No."

"Did he say where he was going?"

"To the island."

"Have you been telling him anything?" demanded Halpine angrily.

"Not a word; and you needn't shake your fist at me, 'cause I won't have it. You can be as big a rascal as you like, Hal Halpine, but I say it's a sin to make that boy one."

"Hold your tongue, Mother Bounce, or you may have it slitted," retorted Halpine.

"Can the boy have made a mistake and run upon one of the Quacks?" he muttered. "I must find out at once."

The appearance of the smuggling schooner had now been altered so that she was not recognized, but Halpine did not intend to return in her, but allowed her to drop down the coast, the men being instructed to disperse and await his instructions.

There was a smaller boat of his own, something of the same size as Harry's, and in this he now set off for the island.

When near it he beheld a sail, and soon became satisfied that Harry was out on some errand or another.

Running down to the stranger, he found that his suppositions had been correct, and that it was indeed Harry's boat.

"Where are you going?" he demanded, with a scowl, not relishing the presence of Nat.

"To the island to rescue May Maxwell. By whose orders was she carried away?"

"By your own, I presume. The man said so. However, I had an objection to the thing myself, and I restored her to her guardian's care, telling him I had found her with the villains who had captured her."

"Then she is in town?"

"Yes."

"Come, Nat, let's go back," and off went the young fellow, while Halpine continued on his way until they should be out of sight.

Poor Harry! He little knew what was in store!

CHAPTER X.

THE ARREST.

Believing that what his father had told him was the truth, Harry returned to Sea Cliff, leaving Halpine to go his own way.

The two boys landed at the wharf, for Harry wished to have his yacht repaired better than he had been able to fix it with the limited means at his command, and the first place he intended to visit was a boatbuilder's, after which he intended to call on May.

As Nat and Harry walked up the wharf on their way to the street they met Sergt. Sumner, Lieut. Reeve and Lieut. Hall, the latter being in the regular naval service, while Sumner was merely employed by the revenue department.

Harry knew the two naval officers by sight, but had no acquaintance with them, and would have passed the party, merely nodding to Sumner, had not Reeve stepped in front of him and said:

"You are Harry Halpine?"

"Yes."

"Where have you been for the last two days?"

"Fishing."

"Around Smugglers' island?"

"I never knew that was a good place to fish."

"Come, come, Harry, own up," said Sumner, pleasantly. "You have been to the island, have you not?"

"Well, I tried to get there, sir, but the channel was too much for us, and we ran ashore on one of the smaller islands. We had a narrow escape, but, fortunately, we managed to patch up the yacht, drag her along the shore till we reached a spot favorable for launching, and then went out, all flying, on an eastward current."

"You did not visit the island, then?" asked Reeve, sharply.

"No, we could not get there," answered Nat, quickly, telling the truth as far as he was concerned.

"I have heard differently," said Lieut. Reeve, sternly, "and am informed on good authority that you have not only been to the island, but that you piloted the smugglers thither, in the absence of their captain."

"That looks reasonable, don't it?" laughed Nat. "If Harry knew the channel, why has he not been to the island before? He could make a fortune taking excursion parties to it. If he knew the way, how is that we ran upon one of the Doctors and nearly lost our lives? You can see for yourselves where we got stove in."

This reply had its effect, but Sumner now added:

"And Miss May has been missing just as long as you have, and our informant tells us that she is a prisoner on Smugglers' island."

"Has not May returned?" cried Harry. "It was to rescue her that I tried to reach the island. I heard just now that she had been rescued."

"From whom did you hear this?"

Harry hesitated, for it at once flashed over him that his father had lied, and that May was still a prisoner.

He could not betray his father, nor even throw suspicion upon him, and he therefore held his peace.

"Who told you this?" demanded Reeve. "Everybody in town knows that it is not so, and here comes Gen. Ainsworth himself. Now we will see if this is true or not."

At this moment Gen. Ainsworth came hurrying up and, catching sight of Harry, blustered out:

"Where is my ward, you young reprobate? What have you done with her?"

"Has she not returned?" asked the sergeant. "We heard that she was safe."

"Safe? Returned? No, indeed; we've not seen her for three days. Take this young villain in custody. I am a magistrate, and I commit him to jail."

"What for?" cried Harry, as the two lieutenants seized him.

"For abducting my ward, for assaulting Mr. Darcy, and for being in league with smugglers. We'll hang you yet, you young villain. Your father may be all right, but shoot me if you are."

"This is an outrage!" cried Harry. "I did not abduct Miss May, and I risked my life in trying to rescue her from the island."

"How did you know she was on the island if you did not take her there?" cried the general, growing red in the face.

Harry was silent, for this was indeed a poser.

"It's no use," continued General Ainsworth, impulsively. "One of your confederates has been taken and has confessed, and you may as well do the same."

"I have no confederates," exclaimed Harry. "You know very well that a party of suspected smugglers tried to abduct May only last week, and that Nat and I rescued her when this brave Guy Darcy of yours showed himself the coward that he is."

"And of course it is they who have taken her away now," added Nat. "What better place could they take her to than the island? I suggested that myself, and Harry said that he would try and make it, but we did not."

"Fiddlesticks!" roared the general, in his hot-headed way. "The young scoundrel took the smugglers to the island. A dozen men saw him at the wheel that day. Take him away."

"You can't lock him up without a hearing," protested Nat.

"Oh, can't we?" sneered Ainsworth, who would brook no interference, imagining himself such a high and mighty creature that no one dared dispute his word. "We'll lock you up as an accomplice if you don't hold your saucy tongue."

A crowd had collected by this time, and among the rest were two constables who had come down to the wharf to see what all the fuss was about.

Harry was forthwith delivered into their custody and hurried off to the village lockup, the crowd following, while Nat went up to Sergt. Sumner, who had remained behind, and said:

"This is all a plot. I tell you that Harry is innocent. If one of the smugglers has said anything it is out of revenge for our having thwarted them the other day."

"I hope he is innocent," replied the sergeant, "as far as the accusation against him goes, that is anonymous. The man has not been captured as that hot-headed general declared."

"The lying old turkey cock!" declared Nat, indignantly. "He hates Harry, and would say anything against him."

"However, be that as it may," resumed Sumner, "it is true that your friend was seen taking the smugglers to the island on the day of the chase. Even Halpine himself could not deny it, and the poor man seemed utterly broken down by the evidence of his son's guilt."

"The poor man is a miserable hypocrite, then," thought Nat, as he walked away, "and he is trying to make Harry as bad as himself."

Then the young fellow walked over to where Harry lived, and, entering the house, found Mrs. Bounce busy in the kitchen.

"Oh, it's you, Nat Nutting, is it?" cried the housekeeper, querulously. "Where's Master Harry?"

"In the lock-up."

"What!" and Mrs. Bounce flopped into a chair. "What's he there for?"

"They say that he piloted the smugglers to the island and that he abducted May Maxwell."

"That's a lie! He never did it! I'll swear that it was Jock and Jan and Phil and that crowd. Master Harry loves the girl too well to do a thing like that."

"That's what I said, but they all declare that he was seen aboard the smuggler this morning."

"Well, that's not strange," asserted the woman, "for he was there and carried them safely to the island. I heard Halpine tell him what to do. If that had been all I wouldn't have said anything, but Halpine wants to make that boy as bad as himself."

"You think so?" cried Nat. "Don't be afraid to talk, for I know what Halpine is. Harry told me, but I would not speak of this to any one else. Halpine lied to us; he said that May had returned when she had not."

"What do you say?" cried Nat, in surprise. "Is not Harry his son?"

"No, he ain't. He was picked up after a wreck. It was then that Halpine discovered the way to the island."

"And does Harry know this?"

"No; for if he did Halpine wouldn't have any hold on him. It's only duty that makes the boy cling to that reprobate. If he knew Halpine as I know him he would turn against him."

"Then, by Heaven, he shall know it!" cried Nat, leaping up.

"Don't say I told you," cried Mrs. Bounce, "and don't tell anybody but Harry himself."

"But how can we get him out, then?"

"You leave that to me."

CHAPTER XI.

THE ESCAPE.

The lock-up in which Harry was confined was a two-story affair, built of brick, the windows guarded with iron bars, and the doors of oak, heavily studded with iron nails and hung with huge hinges.

There were not very many cells to the place, for it was not used often, and sometimes had not a single occupant, and the position of keeper would have been a sinecure, provided the incumbent had not enough to do in other directions.

Harry was conducted to a room six feet wide by ten feet long, the one barred window of which looked toward the water, and then the key was turned in the lock and the young man was a prisoner.

The room was neatly whitewashed, three or four colored prints in painted frames hanging upon the walls, contained a strip of bright rag carpet and was furnished with a single bed, a table, a washstand and chair, the table being provided with a standing rack containing a dozen or more books.

"They have evidently given me the best room in the house," laughed Harry, sitting down and looking around him. "If it was not for the bars one would easily take this for a bedroom in some fisherman's house."

Having little else to do, Harry examined the little library, finding a Bible, a copy of Capt. Cook's voyages, a Family Physician, an odd-bound volume of a popular periodical, several years old, the Swiss Family Robinson, the Book of Martyrs, two or three novels, and an old history of the United States, and picking out one of these at random, Harry amused himself reading until his jailer entered some time afterward.

"I'd've come up and kept you company," the man said, as he sat on the bed, "for I s'pects it's lonesome here, but I had

to get a load of clams for the general and do a job of white-washing for Cap'n North. I'd've sent my daughter Hetty up, but she's too busy."

"You're the best natured jailer I ever heard of," laughed Harry.

"Oh, well, it ain't every day that I get a decent young fellow what's a regular gentleman. That's why I put you here instead of in one of 'em pens downstairs. Why, Hetty sleeps here sometimes, although it's a cell all the same, and a strong one. Your supper'll be up here pretty soon, an' if you don't mind I'll have mine at the same time."

Harry laughed and said, in a pleasant tone:

"Do you think that the squire would be pleased at this free and easy treatment of a prisoner?"

"He won't say anything about it, and besides that, you can't get away. Why, I've known o' you ever since you were a boy, and I know you ain't one of them hardened sinners what I have to shut up and chain to the wall an' then turn a bulldog loose outside of their cell lest they should try to get away."

"And you think I am safe?"

"To be sure. You couldn't get out to save your neck. The windows are barred, the door is double locked, and there are two or more iron doors that you'd have to cut through before you can get outside."

At this moment the jailer's daughter entered with a tray bearing a large platter of fried fish, two plates, knives and forks, and two tin pint pots of coffee.

"There you are," said the jailer, as he laid the table. "We'll have some bread in a few minutes, and then we'll get on famously."

Harry was obliged to laugh at the idea of his jailer taking supper with him, and the consequence was that he made a good supper and felt in excellent spirits.

When it grew dark a couple of candles were lighted, the jailer sent Hetty to the tavern for a pot of beer and lighted his pipe, being evidently bent upon entertaining his prisoner to the best of his ability, though the latter was really more a guest than a captive.

Harry did not smoke. His jailer, who puffed away, laughed and talked until ten o'clock, when he arose and said:

"Well, time's up and I must go. The rules is for all lights to be put out at ten o'clock, but you may be lonesome in the dark, and I won't be strict with you."

Then he left the room and double locked the door, his heavy steps being heard descending the stairs soon after, and then the slamming of a heavy door and the shooting of bolts, after which all was still.

The night was warm, and the windows had been thrown open to admit the air, and now that he was alone, Harry walked toward it and looked out upon the silent night.

The moon had just arisen, and threw its light over the restless sea, silvering all the waves, and Harry was about to cross the room to extinguish the candle, so as to enjoy the moonlight, when he heard a sharp whistling sound just under the window.

He started forward, when a stone suddenly whizzed by his head and fell to the floor.

Around it was tied a long slip of paper, and Harry unfolded this, took it to the light, and read the following:

"Put out the lite and be patient. I will git you out of this soon. Your frend,
JAN."

Harry extinguished the candle and sat down on the bed to await developments, a thousand wild thoughts coursing through his brain.

Ought he to accept the smuggler's assistance and escape,

if that were possible, or ought he to remain in the lock-up and stand his trial and tell all he knew?

If he did that he would have to betray his father, as he believed Halpine to be, and that he could never do, bad as the man might prove to be.

He knew that his mother and May were in all probability still on the island, and it was his duty, therefore, to see to them as soon as possible, and this he could accomplish only by getting out of the lock-up.

Then he remembered the chart of the island which he had made out, and thought how lucky it was that he had not been searched, for then it would have been found upon him, and he would have had to explain how it came into his possession.

"I may need it myself, and it must not fall into other hands," he muttered, as he folded the paper into the smallest compass and tucked it away in a fold of his flannel shirt where there was a double thickness of cloth, pressing it down tightly, so that it might not seem like a seam or welt, and escape detection.

"Nobody must see that, not even my father or his men or the officers. It is one thing to know the channel, and another to let it be known that you know it. The secret must be mine alone."

He sat on the side of the bed for some time looking at the light on the floor, which crept nearer and nearer to him as the minutes passed, and at last heard that hissing sound under the window again.

As he started up a stone came flying through the opening and fell upon the bed, and, picking it up, he found a fine cord attached to it, which, as he drew it in, became gradually stouter until it was a regular cod line that passed through his fingers.

He felt it grow heavier and crossing over to the window, drew it in, and found a couple of files and a bottle of oil attached to it with a second note, which read as follows:

"Yule hav to do your own filin', for i don't like the moon-lite. too bars will be enuff, i guess. cut top an' bottom.

"JAN."

"Well, I suppose I ought to use the means of escape, now that I have them at hand," he mused, "and not question the source."

He looked out, but could see no one, and after waiting for some time and hearing no sound, either within or without, went quietly to work filing one of the iron bars, finding that the file was an excellent one, and, being well oiled, made no noise, being thin and hard, and almost as good as a saw.

He cut entirely through one of the bars at the bottom, and then, bringing the chair to the window and standing upon it, went to work at the top, filing half through and then bending the bar in until the lower end touched the top of the window.

So expeditiously had he worked that not an hour had passed since he first began, and his task was half accomplished.

This gave him strength to go on, and he had attacked the second bar, when he heard that hissing sound below, and a stone fell just within reach of his hand on the window sill.

There was a cord fastened to it, and this he drew up until the end of a rope ladder with an iron hook attached to it appeared.

He secured this hook over the sill and shook the ladder when he felt it grow taut, and in a moment a shadow darkened the window, and the form of Jan the smuggler appeared outside.

"It's risky," the man said, "but time is pressin', and I must give you some help. They's revenue men patrolin' the beach, but they's not at this end now, an' it ain't likely I'll be seen. Give us one of your files."

Then Jan got to work at the top and Harry at the bottom

of the second bar, and by diligent work they had so nearly cut through it at the end of twenty minutes that Jan was able to wrench it clear by a powerful tug.

Harry then tried if he could get through the opening thus made, and finding that he could, passed through, Jan taking away the tools and hurrying down the ladder, and in a moment more Harry stood on the ground outside free.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERY HALF REVEALED.

"There you are, my lad, free again," muttered Jan, hoarsely, as he and Harry hurried around to the corner of the lock-up, where they were in the shadow.

"And where are you going now?" asked Harry. "To one of your hiding places among the rocks."

"I dunno as I kin get to them, for I was watched when I come out, and only got off by hard running. I wouldn't go home if I were you, for you'll find it guarded."

"Why so? Nobody expects that I will get out of the jail. Nobody has done it before. Why shouldn't I go home. That's the last place they would expect to find me."

"Don't know but it is," muttered Jan, as they moved away, Harry taking the lead and hurrying on at a good rate of speed.

As they neared the shore, however, they heard a sudden challenge:

"Who goes there? Stand or I fire!"

Jan pulled Harry to the ground and behind a rock, and at the next instant they saw a shadow on the sand close to them.

It remained stationary, as though the man who made it was listening.

Then a shrill whistle was heard and Jan whispered close to Harry's ear.

"He's calling for help. We must cut for it. Your boat is hidden close by. Follow me. We must get to the water."

Jan suddenly sprang up and made a dash for the sentry, Harry quickly following.

The man's piece was discharged, the shot flying wild, and in another moment he was stretched upon the ground by a blow from Jan's sturdy fist.

The report would attract attention, however, and there was no time to lose, and Jan, calling hastily upon Harry to follow, made straight for a cluster of rocks.

Cries could be heard along the beach, and hurrying footsteps, and soon torches were seen flashing at various points, the moon evidently not being sufficient.

Jan disappeared, but presently came in sight again, just off shore, steering Harry's boat.

"We took it away from where it lay," he said, as he ran up the beach, took Harry on, and pushed off again, "because we thought we might want to use it in getting you away. The cap'n said to get you out at all risks."

Harry now seized the tiller, let go the sheet of the mainsail, and, catching the breeze, glided swiftly out to sea.

Men were hurrying along shore, and some shots were fired, but though one or two passed through the sail, which afforded an excellent mark, no further damage was done.

"I suppose you'll run to the Doctors now," said Jan, taking a seat and watching Harry as he deftly handled the little craft. "You ain't afraid to run the channel at night?"

"Not with such a moon as this," replied Harry, wishing that Nat were with him instead of this uncouth villain.

Jan said no more, and as the shore grew more and more distant the sounds of pursuit died away, and all around them

was still, save for the soft plashing of the waves and the gentle sighing of the wind through the cordage of the little yacht.

An hour passed and the roar of the breakers could be heard, and soon the smuggler's island loomed up dark and silent in the moonlight, its cliffs standing out in bold relief, while nearer the ever rushing waters were seen surging and tossing and churning among the rocks of the Twenty Doctors.

"Sit still," said Harry to Jan, "but be ready to obey my slightest command," and then he laid his course straight toward islands One and Two, keeping on a northeast course and well toward the smaller island, so as to avoid the outward current.

"It's a pity more of us don't know the channel," muttered Jan. "It would save us a heap of trouble."

Harry said nothing, and Jan remained quiet until they had passed the Fat Doctors and were rounding the point of the Red Head.

"How do you know how close to go?" asked Jan. "There's a contrary current here. Have you got a chart in the binacle?"

"Ease off the sheet," said Harry, and they swung around and passed between Red Head and the Quack, which was shaped like a mitten.

The instant the Good Doctor and the Little Doctor were in line on the beam, Harry swung around and struck due north for the former.

"Why can't you give a fellow points?" asked Jan. "You've no business to know what we don't. Tell me how to run the channel, or there'll be trouble," and Jan rose with a savage look on his evil face.

"Sit down!" commanded Harry, sternly. "Do you see that bald rock on our right? One stroke of the wheel and I could send the yacht crashing into it, and we would be lost. Understand me once and for all, I am your commander as well as Capt. Dash, and at the first word of mutiny I will kill you."

Jan looked at the rugged shore of the Baldheaded Doctor, at the rushing waters, at the whirlpool and at the cruel rocks, and then sat down, thinking it better to live awhile longer.

As Harry sped on, looking for the guiding mark on the cliff, he caught sight for an instant of a red light, and knew that his father had placed it there as a guide.

He quickly trimmed his course toward the seemingly blank wall of the bluff, found the opening, glided through, and in five minutes lay at rest on the bosom of the moonlit lake.

"Let me tell you now, Jan," he said, "that if you or any of you ever seek to know the secret of this channel that moment will be your last. The secret is mine and my father's alone. I shall say nothing of this, but beware how you repeat the offense."

There was such a world of determination in the young man's words and look that even Jan was awed, though in a trial of strength he could have overpowered Harry as though he had been but a child.

"Remember!" said Harry, and then he ran ashore, and then Jan leaped out and followed him, taking a warp with him and fastening it to a stone, that the little vessel might not float away.

Jan walked toward the grove just behind the beach, all being as still as death, and Harry stood watching him, trying to remember in which direction lay the houses he had seen when last at the island, and wondering if he had not better ask Jan about his mother.

Suddenly he saw Jan rush out of the grove where he had disappeared, and the next moment a figure all in white strode toward them.

Jan hurried away, muttering some unintelligible sounds, and for a moment Harry felt a nameless fear, which he

quickly overcame, feeling that the figure was human like himself, and could do him no harm.

As it approached slowly toward him the moonlight fell upon its features, and he saw the face of a woman, once beautiful, but now worn and faded by care and trouble.

"Who are you?" asked the figure, coming nearer and laying her hand upon Harry's arm and looking into his face, turning him so that the moonlight would fall upon it.

"I am Harry," cried the young fellow, excitedly, "and you are my mother."

"I am, and I am not," she answered, sadly. "I was a mother to you once before he took me away and kept me prisoner here, but I am not your mother."

"Not my mother!" gasped Harry. "Then where is she?"

"Dead! I took her place when you were but a child, and had just learned to love you when your cruel father entered an evil life, and, fearing I would seek to turn him from it, bore me away to the island."

"But you are his wife?"

"Alas, yes."

"But tell me," cried Harry, "have you seen a beautiful young lady that was brought here a few days ago?"

"You had no hand in her abduction?" cried Kate.

"No, though she was on the vessel which I brought here."

"I knew you did not, and I bade her trust you as I did."

"You have seen her, then?" cried Harry, overjoyed at this discovery.

"Yes, and have spoken to her. She is as pure as she is beautiful, and you are every way worthy of her, I know."

"And where is she?"

Before the woman could reply a noise was heard in the thicket, and at the next moment a tall, commanding figure strode out into the full moonlight.

It was Halpine, known here as Capt. Dash, the smuggler chief.

"Welcome to the island, Harry my lad," cried the captain, taking the boy's hand and pressing it warmly. "I expected you, and left a signal. I knew you would be brave enough to run the channel even at night. Now, let's go up to my house."

Harry turned to speak to the woman, but she was gone. "Where is my mother?" he asked.

"The woman who was here?" and Halpine laughed. "Oh, she tells the same story to all who will listen. You must not mind her—she is mad."

"Mad or not," thought Harry, "I would take her word sooner than that of this false-hearted hypocrite."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SECRET OUT AT LAST

As Harry and Halpine walked along the beach around the upper end of the lake the former said:

"Do you deny that the unfortunate woman is your wife?"

"Did she say she was?" asked Halpine, almost angrily.

"Yes, but that she was not my mother, although she had cared for me when I was a child."

"Was that all?" asked the other, in hard tones.

"Yes; she said no more, except that May had been here."

"Well, as I said before, you must not mind what she says, for she is out of her head. I brought her here because I thought it would be better for her to be quiet. People think that she is dead, and I prefer that they should think so."

"And where is May?" asked Harry, determined to learn the truth.

"I don't know," was the short answer. "You shouldn't have brought her here in the first place."

"I did not."

"She was on the schooner, and I saw her just after you left."

"I did not bring her here, for all that, and I did not know anything of her disappearance until after I had returned to Sea Cliff."

"Well, she is missing now, at all events, and I supposed that you had come here in my absence and taken her away."

Harry did not believe this, but he said nothing, and in a few minutes he and his father came to the house, which the latter entered, procuring a light, and begging Harry to be seated and make himself comfortable.

"Here is something to eat and drink," said Halpine, placing food and a bottle of liquor on the table, "and when you want to go to sleep you will find a couple of beds in the other room. Take whichever you like."

"Are you going to stay on the island all night?"

"Yes, but I am going on the bluffs to take an observation, and I may not be back for some hours."

Harry attacked the food, made quite a meal, leaving the liquor untouched, and then drew a chair to the door and sat looking out upon the open space in front of the grove, watching the dancing shadows in the grove beyond or listening to the whisper of the wind in the treetops.

Halpine remained inside, smoking a pipe, and not a word passed between the two for some time, when the elder man suddenly came out, bringing a chair with him, sat down, and said:

"Harry, you are not as frank with me as you used to be. What has caused the change?"

"I will tell you, sir," answered Harry, boldly; "you have broken faith with me, and that is the reason. I distrust you and all connected with you."

"Why so?" and Halpine spoke quietly enough, though Harry could see by the workings of his face that he was greatly agitated.

"You have not told me the truth. I am confident that May Maxwell is on the island. You told me your wife, whom I had always thought to be my mother, was dead. You have had it reported at Sea Cliff that I carried off May, and that I piloted the smugglers hither."

"You were seen on the schooner. If you had remained at the wheel you would not have been seen."

"That was necessary in order to quell the mutinous rascals who followed you, but that might easily have been explained away. No; you wish to drag me into this wretched life and make me as bad as yourself."

"And are you my judge?" sneered Halpine.

"No; but was it necessary when you discovered the secret of this island, that you should turn it to evil account?"

"It was through you I discovered it," answered Halpine, "and if a change has come upon me, it is your doing, not mine."

"Through me!" cried Harry. "What mystery is this? How could I, a baby, lead to the discovery of this place? I never even approached the place, for fear of being cast upon the rocks. You know yourself how alarmed I was when I found how near we were to it, that day that you first brought me here."

"And yet it was through you that I first learned of it."

"This is inexplicable," returned the young man, greatly puzzled. "Well," he presently added, "if I am responsible, let me undo what I have done, and induce you to forego this life; abandon the island and seek your fortune elsewhere under a new name. I am young, I am strong and hopeful, and am willing to bear the brunt of the burden. I will make a living for us both."

"And your sweetheart?"

"She will be faithful to me, and some day will join me in my new home, or even share it with me now."

"But if I choose to continue this life? You will forsake me, I suppose?" and there was a tinge of bitterness in his tones.

"I could not do that, since you are my father, but why should I be dragged down? The secret of your double life must one day come out. Your men are treacherous fellows and may betray you at any minute. Consider how strong suspicion is, even now. Can it be lived down? Oh, for my sake, for your own, leave this miserable life and begin a new one."

"It is too late!" muttered Halpine.

"No—no, it is never too late. Begin again now—this very night. Leave the island at once, take me, your wife, and May, and let us leave here forever. Take the men with you, if they will go and forget this accursed island."

"Would you still cling to me if I were not your father?" cried Halpin, suddenly.

"Yes, if you would leave this life."

"But if not?"

"Then I would leave you, if you could not be persuaded to give it up."

"And you would hunt me down like the rest?" muttered Halpine, angrily. "You would turn against me, forgetting everything."

"No, no, I could not do that," cried Harry. "I would not be with you, but I could not hunt you down."

"It would be no more than I could expect, knowing who your father was."

"Who he was!" repeated Harry, in amazement. "Then you are not my father, after all."

"No; I found you on the shore after a storm, wrapped in a sea cloak. A vessel had been wrecked, and you were the only one saved, so far as we could learn. In the pockets of the cloak were papers, and one of these was a description of the island, and explicit directions for reaching it."

"Then it was through me that you learned of the island, and when your poor wife begged you not to make an evil use of your knowledge you struck her down."

"How knew you that?" demanded Halpine, angrily, his face flushing.

"I have learned it. No one is to blame for your evil fate but yourself."

"That is immaterial," muttered Halpine. "Will you be one of our party or not?"

"I will not. I have helped you before because I thought you my father. Now that I know the truth I cannot remain with you."

"Your own father was no better than I!" laughed Halpine. "In fact, he was a good deal worse. He was a pirate and, fleeing from England, came over here, expecting to carry on his lawless trade. To him the island of the Twenty Doctors would prove an invaluable retreat."

"It matters not what my father was," cried Harry, "since I shall not follow in his footsteps. You have brought me up to be an honest man, and for that I thank you, but there the obligation ceases."

"And you will not join me in making a fortune by a bold strike?"

"No!" and there was no uncertain ring in the boy's voice as he answered.

"Then the knowledge you have gained this night shall avail you nothing, for you shall never leave the island alive!"

"You will kill me?" gasped Harry.

"That you will learn all in good time," and Halpine arose and strode rapidly away, quickly disappearing in the grove.

CHAPTER XIV.

NAT ON THE LOOKOUT—THE ISLAND BESIEGED.

When Nat left Mrs. Bounce he went directly to the lock-up and asked to see Harry, but was told to come again later in the day.

He did so, but was again denied admission, but was told to come the next morning, and then, resolving that he would see Harry whether or not, went to Sergt. Sumner, General Ainsworth and others, and asked for a permit to enter the jail.

He was put off on one pretext or another, although, as far as Sumner was concerned, the sergeant could really give him no help, and at last, tired out and disgusted, he went home, seeing nothing for it but to wait till morning.

At an early hour he went to the lock-up and when the jailer came to the door demanded to see his friend, as had been promised him.

"You can't see him," said the jailer, "for the very good reason that he isn't here."

"Has he been removed, then?"

"That's it; he's been removed, and that's a very clever way to put it, and very cleverly done it was, too."

"Where is he now?" asked Nat.

"Well, if we knew we should very soon get him back here with us."

"Then he has escaped?" a sudden thought flashing across the boy's brain.

"You hit it, Master Nat. He has been took away by his friends. I am sorry, too, for that proves him to be what I hoped he wasn't—the companion of smugglers and thieves."

"How did he escape?" cried Nat, thinking of what Mrs. Bounce had said.

"Filed through the bars, him on the inside and somebody else on the outside. The patrol 'most got 'em, but they escaped in a boat."

Nat was shown the room where Harry had been confined, and saw how the escape had been effected, the rope ladder having been found on the shore and being now at the lock-up.

Then he went to the wharf and learned that Harry's yacht was missing, and that there was little doubt that he had gone away in it the previous night, as there were many who were ready to swear that it was the one in which the two men escaped.

Nat then hurried off to see Mrs. Bounce, and the minute she let him in he exclaimed:

"Did you know Harry had broken jail and was off to Smuggler's island?"

"No; is that so?" cried the housekeeper. "I'd have gone to work different. Now folks will believe him guilty. I would have got him out with clean hands. It's all that Halpine's doings. He isn't the boy's father at all, and has no claim on him."

"So you told me. You think, then, that Halpine helped him to escape?"

"Or put some of 'em villains up to it. How was it done?"

Nat told all he knew, and Mrs. Bounce listened intently, and at the close thought a few minutes, and then said:

"Jan has had a hand in that. He was always good at climbing and in making rope ladders and such. Tim Bucket cut the files and hardened 'em. He'd be a good mechanic, Tim would, if he'd only stick to his work."

"I found two or three stones on the floor," remarked Nat. "How did they come there, do you suppose?"

"That's Jan again!" cried Mrs. Bounce. "He can write, after a fashion, and the rest can't. He's fastened little notes

to the stones and thrown them in the window. He was always good at that."

"How do you come to know so much about those fellows, Mrs. Bounce?"

"Oh, I kept the village tavern long ago, and knew 'em all. I know enough to send them all to prison, Halpine and all, but I'd never do it on Harry's account. The boy is better than Halpine would ever be. He comes of good stock. Don't tell me that he is a pirate's son, for I won't believe it."

"Who said he was?" demanded Nat.

"Halpine, because he was found wrapped in a cloak that contained mysterious letters, the description of this unlucky island, piratical excursions and all that."

"Was his father ever found?"

"No; but I'll lay all I own that the pirate who owned the cloak wasn't him"

"But the poor fellow is with these villains, and they will try to make him as bad as they are themselves."

"They can't do that, for his mother is there, and she has always loved him and will save him."

"His mother? Is she then alive?"

"Not his own mother, but Kate Halpine. She has been on the island for years. Her cruel husband carried her there. She will see that no harm comes to him."

"Oh, if I only knew the way to the island," fretted Nat. "Wouldn't I have him out of that in a jiffy?"

"Nobody knows that but Harry and his father, and it's death to any one to attempt it if they don't know every turn of the channel."

"I know it, and we had a narrow escape the other day. Any one but Harry would have lost his life."

Harry's escape from the lock-up was the town talk that day, and wherever he went Nat heard nothing but condemnation of his friend until he was sick at heart.

"If I told what I knew I would not be believed," he muttered, "and I must hold my peace and hear all these slanders against the best boy that ever lived. Would that this terrible mystery could only be cleared up."

He met Lieut. Reeve in the afternoon, and with him was Guy Darcy, the young noodle who had dared to think of marrying May Maxwell, and at sight of him Nat's blood boiled.

"So your friend has turned out to be a rogue after all," said the dandy. "That's just what I thought all along."

"Think!" muttered Nat in disgust. "Do such creatures as you are think? I did not know that they had sense enough. Tell the next fellow that says that you think he is a flatterer. You couldn't think to save your neck."

"We must judge by appearances," put in Sumner, who had just stepped up, in company with Lieut. Hall.

"Oh, we must, eh?" sneered Nat. "Well, to all appearances Capt. Halpine is an honorable gentleman, and when in fact he is only Capt. Dash on his good behavior. I heard this from Harry himself, and more than that, I saw him on the deck of the thieving schooner, coming out from among the Twenty Doctors' rocks."

"You did?" cried everybody, in astonishment.

"Yes, I did; and more than that, he is not Harry's father at all, but only picked him up when a child, after a terrible storm in which a ship was wrecked and everybody lost. He only brought him up honest to conceal his own identity better, and this is the mystery of the coast that has puzzled us all for so long."

A crowd had gathered by this time and Nat, bursting with indignation, told all he knew, only omitting the name of his chief informant, and by the time he had finished he had won over many of his hearers to Harry's side.

"If any of you are brave enough," he cried, "send a ves-

sel to the island, lower half a dozen boats, go ashore on the north side and scale the cliffs."

"The only way to reach it at all is by the channel," said Reeve.

"Then I will undertake to pilot you in!" said Nat, in terrible excitement. "I have been half through, and if you will risk it I will engage to go all the way."

But the old sailors in the crowd shook their heads, and Sergt. Sumner said, calmly:

"You can't question the bravery of the naval and revenue men, Nat, but to try and run that awful channel without the requisite knowledge is only to court death in its most terrible form. The shores of those treacherous islands are white with the bones of men who have perished in the hopeless attempt to reach the island."

"At all events, if you can get in you can keep him from coming out," cried Nat. "Station two vessels at the mouth of the channel and fire on the villain the moment he attempts to leave."

"We can do that, certainly," observed Reeve, "and the suggestion is a good one. There is some color to the assertion that Capt. Dash and Halpine are the same, for the latter has not been seen for two or three days. He must, therefore, be on the island, or elsewhere. If he is on it, we can prevent him from leaving. If he is not, we cannot stop him from landing."

Nat's offer to pilot a vessel to the island was therefore rejected, though his proposition to subject it to a siege was considered good, and was acted upon at once.

It was a pity it had not been thought of before, however, for the plan was not carried out until the next morning, and when the vessels reached the neighborhood of the island they saw the smuggling schooner just leaving, and, shaking out her sails, she skimmed away right before their eyes and was soon lost to sight, being too fleet for her pursers.

"Well, we can at least prevent her return," declared Lieut. Reeve, who commanded one of the vessels, "and we'll drive the rascally captain away if we can't do anything else."

CHAPTER XV.

THE ESCAPE AND CAPTURE—HARRY A PRISONER.

Capt. Dash strode away toward the grove, leaving Harry sitting by the door, tormented by a thousand varying thoughts.

"What duty do I owe to a man like that?" he cried. "His life has been one long lie, and he can be true to no one. Would it be base to track him here, after he has shown me the way? Ah, he thought he had me in his power, and so told me all this, but he will find that I am his match."

Presently that strange white figure that had alarmed him before suddenly appeared on the edge of the grove, beckoning to him.

He hastily left the house and sought the woman's side, her first words being:

"I have found her. They hid her away, but I have found her. She is true to you, and will believe nothing that those wicked men say."

"Have you found my darling, my May?" Harry asked, trembling with excitement.

"Yes. They hid her from me, but I have found her at last."

"Take me to her?"

The woman led the way through the wood, and before long came to a small cottage or hut belonging to a collection of similar ones, but standing somewhat apart from them.

Then she rapped softly on the door, and in a moment a little window at one side was raised and a young girl appeared.

"May!"

"Harry!"

The young fellow threw his arms about his sweetheart's neck and kissed her passionately, then exclaiming:

"You did not believe that I had taken you away, did you, my own? I have come to rescue you from this horrid place and take you home."

"Your mother bade me trust in you, Harry," said the girl, "and I have done so, Harry. You cannot think how sad I felt when they told me that you had done this. I wanted to die, and threw myself into the lake and was nearly killed by a shark, but the captain saved me."

"There is one good deed to his credit, at all events," muttered Harry, "but you must not stay here. Time is precious, and we must make the most of it."

"But the door is locked, and is too strong to break down."

"Then the window must serve," and seizing hold of the light sash, Harry tore it out by one effort.

The opening was still too small, however, and poor Harry was despairing of being able to rescue May, when a voice was heard saying:

"Tell me the secret of the channel and I will open the door."

Harry turned quickly and saw Jan standing close at hand.

He would have sprung upon the man and wrung the key from him, but Jan leaped back and cried, warningly:

"Look out! I am armed, my young master, and I won't answer for your safety if you try treachery."

"Do you dare threaten me?" hissed Harry. "If you have the key open the door at once. I am your master here—remember that."

"I must know how to enter the lake from the outside first."

Harry mused a moment, and then said, abruptly:

"Open the door, then, and I will tell you; but I will only tell you once, and you must remember what I say."

"Oh, you can rely upon my remembering. Will you give me your word that you will tell me how to get in?"

"Yes."

Jan then produced an iron key, opened the heavy door of the little hut, and in a moment May was in her lover's arms.

"Now the secret!" cried Jan.

"Very well. It is this—steer north by east between One and Two, turn to northeast when you see the white stone on Two, then around Seven, northwest, until you reach the point of Red Head, then due east between that and the Quack, Number Seventeen, till Fourteen and Twenty are in a line right on your beam, then due north until you catch the eddy, then, when you see the mark on the cliff, go due north straight for the bluff until you come to the opening. After that it is plain sailing."

"H'm! That would bother me some if I wasn't quick at remembering," muttered Jan, "but to show that I do, here it is again," and he repeated what Harry had said, word for word.

"That will do," said Harry, "but it takes more than memory to run through that infernal channel. It takes a clear head, a strong arm and a stout heart."

"And I have 'em all!" chuckled Jan. "Now, how do you get out?"

"The best way you can," laughed Harry. "Do you think I am a fool? I only agreed to tell you the way in—not the way out."

"Yes, yes, young master; but what's the use of getting in if you can't get out?"

"That's your lookout, not mine."

"But I meant, of course, the way in and out."

"Will you swear to leave Capt. Dash if I tell you?"

"No, young master, I daren't do that."

"Then I cannot tell you. I have done all I promised."

"Come," whispered Kate to Harry. "Time presses and you must not delay."

Harry put his arm around May and hurried off toward the beach, Jan remaining by the hut, which he locked and left as it had been.

In a few minutes Harry reached the place where he had left his yacht, but it had disappeared, and there was no other vessel in sight.

There was not even a boat, as that would have answered, but the poor fellow saw at once that he was still a prisoner on the island.

"I will not stay here," he cried, desperately. "I must get away, and at once. I will swim the whole distance, if necessary, and then return with a vessel and capture the island."

"You are mad!" cried Kate. "What you intend is impossible."

"For Heaven's sake, don't enter the water!" screamed May, throwing herself upon Harry's breast. "The shark will seize you."

"So, so, you must still remain here, I see," was heard, in sneering tones, and turning, the party beheld Halpine approaching, with several of his men at his side.

"Stand back!" cried Harry, desperately. "You shall not touch this lady."

"Seize that young rebel!" said Halpine, coolly.

The men dashed forward, surrounded our hero, and, in spite of his desperate resistance, overpowered him.

"Away with him!" cried Halpine, "and see that he does not escape."

Then the poor fellow was dragged away without being able to see what became of May, and in a few moments the party plunged into the thicket.

Harry was taken to one of the storehouses in the woods and locked up in a strong, small room, the doors of which were of heavy oak timbers and the windows too small to pass through, and being, besides, secured by stout irons.

Here the poor fellow was left to bemoan his sad lot, having nothing with which to occupy his mind, and being obliged to pace up and down or lie upon the hard stone floor, the place being utterly devoid of furniture.

The windows were too high to reach, and he could therefore see nothing that was passing outside, the only sounds he heard being those usual at night in the woods.

After walking up and down restlessly until he was utterly exhausted, he stretched himself upon the floor and presently fell asleep, though from time to time he awoke, feeling sore and unrested, and thus the weary night passed by.

In the morning one of the men, whom he did not know, brought him food and water, a mattress to lie upon and a three-legged stool, and then, without a word, left the place and locked the door behind him.

Just before dark another man entered, bringing a fresh supply of food and a candle in an iron holder, which he lighted and placed on the floor.

This second night was passed more comfortably than the first, and in the morning half a dozen of the captain's men entered, while one signalled to Harry that he was to go outside.

The young fellow obeyed, and was escorted to the beach, placed in a boat, and rowed to the schooner, which now lay at anchor in the middle of the lake.

When he stepped aboard Harry was taken to the cabin, where Halpine sat at a table reading.

The man made no sign and the prisoner was taken to a small stateroom and locked in.

Shortly after this he felt that the schooner was in motion, and from the frequent changes of position, the creaking of blocks and the surging of the waves outside, he knew that they were running the channel and leaving the island.

Where they were bound, what was to be done with him, whether May was on board, or whether he would ever see her again, were all questions which puzzled him, but they could not be solved at present, and so he determined to wait and be prepared for the worst.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PROPOSITION—THE REJECTION.

The sun shone brightly over the sea, fleecy clouds scurried here and there across the sky, a gentle breeze rippled the waves, and the white sails of the ships looked like the wings of birds, glad to be set free in the balmy air of heaven.

The smuggling schooner held her course to the northward after her escape from the vessels sent to capture her, and all day kept straight on, her captain laughing at the efforts made to entrap him.

It was afternoon, and a flood of golden sunlight enveloped the boundless ocean, the captain walking up and down the quarterdeck in moody thought, a dark cloud upon his brow, his head bowed and his strong arms folded over his massive chest.

Suddenly he paused, looked around, and then addressing Jan, said, shortly:

"Have my son conducted to my cabin, and tell him that I will presently see him."

Jan touched his cap and disappeared in company with two of the men, Halpine continuing his monotonous promenade.

In a few minutes Jan appeared on deck, and, catching sight of him, Halpine descended the companion ladder, took a look around him, and then went below.

He found Harry sitting in the cabin in an easy attitude, and at once addressed him.

"You would have deserted me at the island and carried away your lady love?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"You are tired, then, of my society?"

"So long as it brings me into association with smugglers and other evil-doers, I am. Abandon your present life, and no one will cling more devotedly to you than myself."

"Do you despise him who has ever been a kind and indulgent father to you?" demanded Halpine, in a rage.

"No, I despise only his calling, and pity him."

"You should be satisfied with all I do and trust me in all things, if you love me as you say you do."

"Such blind and unreasonable love is only felt by fools, and I am not one," was the bitter answer.

"Then you refuse to join your life with mine?"

"In treading the paths of wickedness, yes. I would sooner die."

"You don't know what you say. Die at your age, when life is brightest?"

"Better so than die an old man, disgraced and dishonored."

"I can make your life a burden to you, and you will wish for death a thousand times."

There was no answer, and Halpine, in a rage, struck his fist on the table, and roared out:

"Do you know what I threaten?"

"Yes; but it shall not turn me from my purpose."

At this moment Jock appeared at the cabin door, and said, excitedly:

"The wind has risen, sir, and it looks squally."

"Then clap on all sail, and send Jan and Pike to me."

Jock, greatly wondering at this strange order to clap on sail in a squall, hurried away, and presently the creaking of blocks and tackle, the flapping of sails and the increased swash of the waves, told that they were going at greater speed than before.

Jan and Pike came into the cabin, and Halpine, pointing to Harry, said fiercely:

"Seize that young rebel and take him on deck. If he does not repent, keelhaul him."

The two ruffians seized the lad and hustled him above, where the word had already gone forth that the young master was to be keelhaunched for refusing to enter the service.

Harry turned pale at the dreadful threat, but schooling himself to endure anything rather than break his word, uttered never a sound, and stood like a statue, while the men hastily stripped him, bound a rope about his ankles, passing one end up toward his head, taking a turn under his arms, and making a half hitch.

One end was then run through a block at the end of the flying jibboom, and brought in on deck, the men laying hold of the other end.

"Haul away!" shouted Halpine, and Harry was run out to the end of the flying jibboom, where he hung suspended.

"Will you join us?" asked the captain.

There was no answer.

"Will you join us?" again demanded Captain Dash. "I'll ask you three times, and if I don't get any answer, under the keel you go."

There was no reply, and in a moment the man asked again:

"Are you ready to do your duty among us?"

"No, and I never will be," said Harry, speaking for the first time.

"Lower away!"

The men hauled away on the line, and Harry shot down into the water right under the vessel, which was now scurrying over the waves at a frightful speed under the influence of the coming tempest.

The motion of the vessel itself carried him aft, and in a few moments he appeared above the surface just astern, and was hauled up to the rail.

"There are sharks around, sir," muttered Jock. "He scraped on the bottom and spilled some blood. That'll attract 'em. Shall we lower again?"

The captain was about to answer, when, seeing ominous signs around him, he cried:

"Take in topsails, reef courses, furl the flying-jib."

The men hastily flew to their positions, and someone hauled Harry, bleeding and half senseless, upon deck.

There was no time for delay, and had the task of taking in sail been put off another minute, the vessel would have been dismasted.

"Take that obstinate pig below," growled Captain Dash. "We've no time to attend to him now."

Pike and Phil carried the poor, half dead boy to the cabin, unbound him, and laying him on a bed, covered him with a coarse blanket, and left him to himself.

There was much to be done for the safety of the vessel, for one squall succeeded another, and at dark a high gale set in that lasted all night, and during that time Captain Dash never left the deck, the coast being a dangerous one, and perils surrounding them on every side.

And all this time Harry tossed uneasily on his bed, racked with pain, burning with fever, and delirious from excitement and suffering.

Had he been dragged under the keel a second time it was

doubtful if he would have survived, as the sharks were thick and ravenous, but a kind Providence was watching over him, and he was yet to be spared for better things.

At daybreak the storm had abated but little, although they were now comparatively safe, having gotten away from the more dangerous parts of the coast, and being well out to sea, so that the captain could leave Jock in charge while he went below for a hot breakfast and a nap, leaving word to be called if anything serious arose, but not for four hours otherwise.

After he had fallen asleep Jan went into Harry's room, bound up his hurts, made him as comfortable as possible, and then left him, muttering:

"Captain's a dog, and if this young fellow lives he'll be hot for revenge. That'll be my time, then, and if things go right I'll oust Captain Dash and be captain of the island myself, as I've long waited to be."

CHAPTER XVII.

A CLEVER MANEUVER—A STRANGE PILOT.

The two vessels watching the Smuggler's Island remained in the vicinity all that day after the schooner had so cleverly eluded them, waiting for its return.

They cruised about all that day and the next without seeing any suspicious sails, but on the morning of the third day a vessel was seen approaching, and a strict watch was kept upon her movements.

She did not seem bound for the island, however, and came toward them as if rather seeking than avoiding them.

She was a clumsy-looking craft, and appeared like a fisherman, and, when she drew nearer, hailed them, her captain saying that he had something to tell of a suspicious craft he had seen the day previous.

Lieutenant Reeve held a conversation with the skipper through his speaking trumpet, and while this was going on the clumsy schooner somehow got between the revenue vessel and the island.

"We rather thought we'd kept the rascal away," cried Reeve. "and it will be dangerous for him to attempt to return," being satisfied from the description the skipper gave that the vessel he had seen was that of Captain Dash.

"Don't be too sure of that, my friend," shouted a well-known voice, as the schooner suddenly stood away and headed straight for the Twenty Doctors' rocks, at the same time going through a strange metamorphosis.

Her heavy sides suddenly shriveled up, and were pulled in over the rail, being nothing more than canvas, weighted and hung over the water, her short masts became taper spars, her clumsy sails were unfurled and were fit for any yacht, while her slow going rate was at once changed into the speed of an ocean racer.

Her captain's voice had altered from the drawl of a Yankee skipper to the sharp, incisive tones of one accustomed to rule, and in a moment the truth was out.

"It's Captain Halpine!" cried Nat, "and we've been nicely fooled."

So they had, for the bold smuggler had taken his vessel right under their very noses into just the position he desired, and was now standing in toward the island under all sail.

Both vessels at once gave chase, and Lieutenant Reeve sent a shot hurtling over the waves, just missing the smuggler.

The latter returned the shot from his stern-chasers on the quarterdeck, and carried away the revenue man's flying-jib, causing him to lose headway.

Halpine roared out a taunting farewell, and then sped on

toward the island, his schooner threading the dangerous passage and putting pursuit at defiance.

The two vessels sent several shots whistling after him, but they only fell in the water or rattled against the rocks, doing no harm to the vessel at which they were aimed.

The two commanders beat a hasty retreat before getting too near the island, for fear of being drawn into some dangerous current and thrown upon the rocks.

Both Lieutenants Reeve and Hall and Sergeant Sumner were determined that the impudent smuggler should not again escape them, and a strict watch was kept on the island both night and day.

One vessel remained near the mouth of the channel, while the other cruised around the island seeking for a good landing place.

Several shots were fired, but they only hurled themselves against the cliffs, which could have withstood such an assault for ages.

A boat was sent in shore on the western coast, but the water was so shallow, and there were so many treacherous quicksands, that no landing could be effected.

Then, too, a gun, stationed somewhere on shore out of sight among the rocks, raked the coast and destroyed the boat, so that the attempt to land at that point was abandoned.

Further south the vessel was nearly wrecked on a line of hidden reefs, and in attempting to make a passage between two of the larger islands on the west a boat was blown to atoms by a torpedo sunk in the channel.

The only way to capture the smuggler, therefore, was to starve him out, and the two commanders therefore prepared for a long siege.

The second day after the return of the smuggler to the island a little sailboat was seen approaching, and as everything was now regarded with suspicion, Lieutenant Reeve at once put down toward the little craft.

"There's only one man in it," cried Nat, "and I think I've seen him before."

The boat approached, ran alongside, dropped its sail, and then the solitary man on board cried out:

"If you seek to burn out that rat yonder, and can trust me, I will help you to do it."

"It's Jan," muttered Nat to Lieutenant Reeve, "and he's a smuggler himself. He was one of the crew that tried to abduct May Maxwell when Harry and I prevented them."

"Who are you?" asked Reeve, addressing the man in the boat.

"My name is Jan Fergus, and I have been one of the crew of Captain Dash, but the scoundrel has maltreated me, and turn about is fair play."

"What do you propose to do?"

"To hunt him out of his den."

"You do not know the channel?"

"I do, and will take you through, if you will trust me."

"How did you discover the secret?"

"That matters not. Will you trust to me?"

"Come aboard."

"I am safe?"

"Yes."

"On your honor?"

Jan then threw the warp of his boat to Nat, clambered up by the main chains, and quickly reached the deck.

"Do you mean to say that you can take a vessel in safety through that frightful passage to the island?"

"If you will trust me I will undertake it."

"And your motive?"

"Revenge upon Captain Halpine. Justice to his outraged son."

"Where is he?"

"I know not, but his sufferings have stirred up my very

soul. I've been a bad man, but I can't go as far as that demon yonder."

"Is Harry dead?" asked Nat.

"I don't know, but if he be, then so much worse for the cap'n."

"How did you learn the secret of this channel?" asked Reeve.

"I won't tell that."

"How do I know that you do know it?"

"I give you my word that I do, though, I tell you squarely, I never took a craft through it."

"Your word!" sneered Sumner. "What is that worth? You are a desperate man; you may have been detailed by your captain to peril your own life in order to destroy us and our vessel."

Jan bowed his head, folded his arms across his breast, and said calmly, but with great firmness and self-possession:

"I know my word is worthless, but I will tell you that you may shoot me dead the moment the vessel is in any danger I can't save her from. I put my life into your hands."

"And if you fail?" asked Reeve impressively, feeling a half trust in the man.

"Kill me. Will you trust me?"

"Yes."

"Then, God helpin' me, and I never called on Him afore, I'll take you safely through the channel!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

JAN'S ANGER AROUSED—AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY—HARRY'S ESCAPE.

Poor Harry lay tossing with the fever all one day and night in his bunk, and but one person came near him all that time.

This was Jan Fergus, the smuggler, who, partly from his liking of the boy on account of his many good qualities, which appealed to the man in spite of himself, and partly from his own ambitions, had determined to befriend the lad.

His attentions angered Captain Dash, and once, when the storm had somewhat abated, as he was going into the cabin with a bowl of nourishing soup for the patient, the brutal commander dashed it from his hand and struck him across the face.

"Who constituted you that brat's nurse?" he demanded furiously.

Jan flashed up in a moment, and hissed in a passion:

"As there is a sky above us, cap'n, you'll live to repent this."

"What do you mean? Do you dare threaten me?" yelled the captain, hurling Jan to the deck and bestowing a brutal kick upon him as he lay stunned at his feet.

Then he went away, and Jan picked himself up, muttering vengeance.

The man went away to his bunk, and taking a piece of paper from under one of the boards, looked over it carefully.

"I've got that much by heart," he muttered, "and if I could get one look at the chart, or go through the channel once more, I'd risk my life on being able to run it myself. The boy didn't lie, and some day this tyrant will be come up with."

Then he put away the paper in a safe place, and, watching his chances, stole down into the cabin at dusk and gave Harry some food and some quieting medicine.

Someone had thrown the boy's clothes into a corner, and when Jan saw these his eyes lighted up with an eager glow that showed he had something important in his thoughts.

He caught up the trousers and examined all the pockets, and then went through the coat in the same way, even ripping open the lining with his knife in his anxiety.

"It's for him as well as me!" he hissed, "and I must find

it if he has one. He'll never go back upon that villain; but that ain't me. Curse him! I'd do it in a minute."

Then he picked up the blue shirt which Harry had worn so much, and passed every part of it between his hands.

"It would be funny if he didn't make something of the kind," he muttered, "and I'll swear I saw him looking at a paper once. Halloo! what's this?"

He suddenly felt a sort of wad at the bottom of a seam where there were two thicknesses of cloth, and this he examined most carefully.

Picking up his knife, he ripped open the seam, and drew out a small wad of paper, closely folded so as to take up as small a space as possible.

Dropping the shirt upon the floor, Jan thrust the paper into his pocket, stole out of the cabin unobserved, and made his way to the forecastle.

It was not until late that night that he was able to look at the paper he had found, and then by the light of an oil-lamp, he unfolded it carefully, and ran his eye hastily over it as he smoothed it out upon his knee.

"Chart of the Smugglers' Island and the Twenty Doctors.—Drawn by H. Halpine."

That was what first caught his eye, and he actually turned pale in his eager anxiety.

"There's the island, pictured out just as it lies," he muttered, "with the lake and the beach, the huts, the magazine, and storehouses, the captain's quarters, and all, natural as life."

Looking around with a startled gaze, for fear someone might be watching him, Jan continued his examination of the chart, presently muttering:

"And there's everyone of the Twenty Doctors with its number and position, the signal on the cliff, the white rocks and all. Now, Captain Dash," he added fiercely, "we'll see if you and the boy are the only pilots to the island."

Producing the paper that he had hidden under the boards of his bunk, Jan now went over it with the greatest attention, following the course given him by Harry on the chart.

Then, with a sharp pencil, he traced out the course with the utmost care, guarding against making a single false line, and striking them all by a small pocket compass, so as to impress upon his mind the exact direction he should take and the relative position of every rock and current.

"I'd hazard my life on it now," he murmured beneath his breath, as he folded both papers together with the greatest care, and concealed them on his person.

Late at night, when Halpine was sleeping, he stole into the cabin again, and, finding Harry awake, but less restless, gave him food and medicine and watched by his bedside until he fell into a quiet sleep.

The next day Harry was considerably better, although he did not know that it was to Jan that he owed his improved condition.

The weather was now pleasant, and the vessel bowled on over the wave, Captain Dash making for the Canada shore, where he meant to dispose of part of his cargo, and take in another to get rid of elsewhere.

Harry remained in his cabin all day, and saw nothing of the captain, though he heard him swearing at the men during the day, being evidently in none of the best of tempers.

When night fell, Harry, who had formed certain plans of his own, and was dressed and ready to act at a moment's notice, was surprised by a visit from Halpine.

"So you are up and as well as ever!" sneered the man.

"No thanks to you for that," retorted Harry.

"You still adhere to your foolish determination?"

"I have changed none of my views."

"You are base enough to turn traitor if you had the chance?"

"The secret of the island is safe with me," retorted Harry, feeling sure that Jan would never be able to make use of the knowledge imparted to him.

"I will not trust you," sneered the captain. "You shall never see the island again—you shall never leave this vessel alive."

"We shall see!" muttered the boy, springing to his feet.

Halpine expected an attack, and sprang aside.

He had misinterpreted Harry's movement, however, as he quickly discovered to his cost.

The young man sprang past him, snatched the key from the door, slammed and locked it on the outside, and then ran hurriedly on deck, throwing the key in the water.

"Stop him!" yelled Halpine from the stateroom windows.

Half a dozen fellows made a dash at Harry, but Jan managed to trip up two of them, and by that time Harry had reached the rail.

In an instant he leaped up, and then, throwing his hands above his head, plunged overboard, cutting the waters like a knife.

"Lower a boat!" yelled Jock. "He must not escape."

"I guess you'll wait for orders," muttered Jan. "The captain won't care if the beggar drowns."

Just then the captain appeared on deck, having burst open the door, and at once asked:

"Where is that mutineer?"

"Overboard," answered Pike.

"Then let him drown!" hissed the smuggler. "We're well rid of him."

"But if he is dead you'll have an account to settle with me for it," muttered Jan to himself, "and you'll find I never forget old scores."

And on the next day, when they put in shore, Jan was nowhere to be found.

CHAPTER XIX.

HARRY NEARS HOME AND MAKES A BOLD RESOLUTION.

When Harry struck the water, after leaping from the rail of the smuggling schooner, he descended to a great depth and came up at some distance from the vessel.

As he struck out his hand suddenly touched something rough and wet, and for an instant a great dread filled his soul as he thought of sharks and other sea monsters.

In a moment, however, he discovered what the object was.

It proved to be a life buoy, and Harry knew that someone, he knew not who, had thrown it overboard for his use.

He was not aware of the care which Jan had given him, and did not suspect the man of doing him this latest kindness, but such indeed was the fact.

Supporting himself on the buoy, he pushed away from the schooner whose lights he could see, and swam off in the darkness, drifting further away from the vessel each moment and impelling himself forward with all his strength.

At last, when the lights of the smuggler were no longer distinctly seen, Harry supported himself upon the buoy and floated on, not caring to exert himself too much while it remained dark.

At last the moon came up, and in the distance he could see the outlines of the coast lying across the path on which he was drifting.

It was some distance away, however, and he was drifting along, as well as toward it, but this did not disturb him, as he wished to get as far away from Captain Dash and his enemies as possible.

An hour later he had drifted in considerably nearer, but a strong current was bearing him past the shore, and considerable strength would have been required to stem it.

Merely satisfying himself, therefore, that there was no danger of sweeping by the land entirely and being driven out to sea, Harry climbed upon the buoy and stretched himself out to rest.

It was large enough and sufficiently buoyant to enable him to do so, and although he was wet, he was not so thoroughly saturated as he had been before, and was consequently more comfortable.

He even managed to doze now and then for a few minutes, and in this manner obtained considerable rest during the night.

Toward morning, however, he felt that the tide was running out, and, fearful of being carried to sea, he threw himself into the water and endeavored to propel the buoy forward.

It offered so much resistance to the tide, however, that his task was an arduous one, and he soon saw that he would only waste his strength and accomplish nothing by persisting in this course.

Abandoning the buoy, therefore, he trusted to his arms alone, and striking out slowly and easily, he made good progress against the out-running tide, and presently his feet struck the sand.

Thence he waded and swam on until beyond the reach of the tide, and then hurrying forward, soon stepped out upon dry land, falling upon his knees, gave thanks for his deliverance.

Beyond him he could see a line of small trees or shrubbery, and pushing forward, he entered this, and protected from the wind, threw himself upon the soft grass and was soon asleep.

He awoke at sunrise, and, removing his clothes, wrung the water from them, laid them out on the warm sand to dry, and took a plunge in the surf to start his blood into circulation.

Dressing himself, he started off on a swift walk along the coast, and soon got rid of the stiffness in his joints caused by his night's exposure.

In the course of a couple of hours he came upon a road leading up from the shore, the roofs and spires of a little seaport town being observed in the distance.

He struck up this road, and in a short time came to a little cottage, through the open door of which he could see the family at breakfast.

Going boldly forward, he represented himself as having been washed off a vessel the night before, and asked for something to eat, knowing the proverbial hospitality of fishermen.

He was given a hearty welcome and treated as a favored guest, the head of the family not bothering him with troublesome questions, but merely asking him whither he was bound.

"I have friends in Sea Cliff, down the coast here a bit," he replied, "and I think if I can get there I will be all right."

"I'm going that way, but not that far," said the fisherman, "and as stout young fellows are not readily picked up nowadays, I'll give ye a lift if ye don't mind working your way."

"Not a bit," returned Harry.

"Ah! I thought you were one of the right sort," was the answer, and the affair was settled then and there.

The fisherman sailed with the tide, and Harry was put twenty-five miles further on his journey that day, finding himself in a bustling town, where it would be an easy matter to find work and obtain money to carry him further.

He worked in a shipyard for a couple of days, and earned enough to enable him to take a little coast-wise steamer, which put him still further on his journey.

Then, finding no vessel bound in the right direction, he started to walk, and thus occupied two more days, at the end of which time he was within thirty miles of Sea Cliff.

He heard that Captain Dash had returned to the island, and that two Government vessels were besieging him.

"If he is there, then so are May and my unhappy mother," thought the boy, "and come what will, I mean to rescue them from that scoundrel."

CHAPTER XX.

BEARDING THE LION IN HIS DEN.

Jan Fergus stood at the helm of Lieutenant Reeve's vessel, ready to take her through the almost impassable channel to the smugglers' island.

On either side of him stood a man with a loaded gun in his hand, ready to fire at the instant the command was given.

On the quarter-deck paced Lieutenant Reeve, anxious, but calm, resolved to take this awful risk, and yet hardly daring to think what might be the result.

As for Jan himself, he had counted the cost, and was willing to undertake the risk of losing his life either on the rocks or at the hands of Lieutenant Reeve.

If any doubt had existed in his mind, it was that Harry had given him the wrong course, but this was quickly dispelled when he remembered the good character the boy had always borne, and his reputation for truthfulness.

"I am ready," said the man, putting his hands on the spokes of the wheel. "Let the jibsheet off a bit."

Jan had Harry's chart pinned in front of him on the house, just forward of the binnacle, where he would look at it whenever it became necessary.

Then, with his eyes fixed on the little island at the entrance of the channel, he headed the vessel north by east, keeping close to the Little Doctor and watching for the white rock on the end of No. Two.

All went well until they reached the point of Red Head, for Jan had a strong and a steady hand, and his clear, sharply given orders were obeyed upon the instant.

Upon rounding the point, he ventured a trifle too close to the rocks, and the vessel listed terribly to starboard.

It was an anxious moment to Jan, and the cold sweat stood in beads upon his forehead.

He darted one swift glance toward Lieutenant Reeve, and saw the officer open his lips to speak.

"Let go the jib!" he yelled, giving the wheel a spoke. "Now, then, haul to windward! So! let go! Belay!"

The vessel righted, cleared the rocks, struck the deep water, and bowled on, the danger having been passed by a hair's breadth.

Jan had been within a second of death, and his face was the hue of ashes, his heart almost ceasing to beat.

On they went between Doctor Red Head and the largest of the Quacks, straight for the shore of Bald Head.

Here was his greatest peril, but Jan kept his eye alternately on the chart, and on the water abeam.

"Tack ship," he cried, giving the wheel a swift turn as the two islands came in line.

The waters surged and boiled, the vessel strained and labored, the spray dashed over the men, and all hands seemed bound to destruction.

The officer looked at Jan, but saw no sign of flinching, and kept his peace.

In a moment the vessel stood on toward the Good Doctor, on an even keel, and Nat muttered:

"He's all right now. That's where Harry and I missed it, and it's the worst place in all the bay."

"The worst is past," said Jan quietly, his color returning. "I'd stake my life on it now."

For all that he never relaxed his vigilance, but held his course till he struck the eddy off the shore of the Good Doctor, following it till he saw the mark on the cliff, when he steered due north.

"Where are you going?" cried Reeve. "Do you wish to dash us on the rocks?"

"For God's sake! don't fire!" cried Jan, turning pale. "I swear to you that I am going right! Look at the chart!"

Reeve darted a swift glance at the chart, and lowered his half uplifted hand.

Straight on went the vessel till it seemed as though about to be hurled against the rocks.

"Tack ship!" cried Jan, and in another moment the opening appeared, and they glided into the smooth waters.

All hands set up a shout, and Jan was declared to be a trump.

"You have kept your word," said Reeve, "and your life is safe."

"Not yet," answered Jan. "We are not in the lake."

And suddenly, as they rounded a bend in the channel, they saw a boat pulling toward them.

The men shouted again, and the boat hurried back whence it had come at all speed.

"Clap on more sail and run 'em down," yelled Jan, "before they can spread the news."

The boat ran in shore, however, and the men escaped in nooks among the rocks.

On went the vessel, and soon the channel widened, and the lake was seen beyond.

At that moment a shot was fired from the rocks on the right, and went tearing through the mainsail.

At the next the smuggling schooner was seen hurrying toward them under full sail.

"Let her have it!" cried Sumner, and the two guns forward were run out and fired.

The smuggler answered, and in an instant the air was thick with smoke.

"Fire again and blind them," cried Jan, "and then we can get in. If we drive them out, so much the better, for the scoundrel'll be between two fires."

The cannons blazed away, and a thick cloud of smoke hung over the waters.

On dashed the vessel, and in a moment there came a terrible crash.

The two opposing vessels had collided with a terrible shock.

"My work is done," cried Jan, leaving the wheel and staggering forward. "Give me a glass of grog."

He would have fallen had not one of the men caught him, and he was as bloodless as a ghost.

"Are you hurt? Have you been hit?" cried Reeve, anxiously.

"No, no, it isn't that; but the reaction is——"

Then he fainted, and Nat came up with a flask of spirits he had hurriedly fetched from the cabin.

Jan was given a few drops of this, and revived somewhat, staggering to his feet and crying excitedly:

"Don't kill Captain Dash by any means. Take the villain alive, no matter what it costs!"

Lieutenant Reeve thought but little of those words then, attributing them to the vengeful feelings of the man who had piloted them into the lake.

He afterward had full cause to remember them, and recognized their importance.

The smoke had now lifted, and the smuggling schooner was seen at a little distance, her deck crowded with men, her captain a prominent figure as he shouted out his orders in hoarse tones.

"If any man kills that traitorous son of mine," he cried, "he dies. I wish the ungrateful brat to die by my hand alone."

Jan swallowed a mouthful of liquor, seized a cutlass, sprang

to the rail, and, as the two vessels came toward each other, hissed out:

"Then kill me, Hal Halpine, for this is my work! You struck me a cowardly blow, and you shall swing for it and dearly repay the death of Harry Halpine."

"Shoot them down like dogs!" roared Halpine. "Let none escape alive!"

The sound of the drum was heard on board Lieutenant Reeves' vessel, and the men quickly hurried to quarters, Sergeant Sumner taking command of the gunners while Reeve headed the marines.

"Here's for another shot!" cried Nat, as he threw a burning torch on the vent of one of the guns forward, and the report which followed showed that now the fight had begun in earnest.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PAST ONCE MORE RECALLED.

Mrs. Bounce, Captain Halpine's housekeeper, was a woman of sociable disposition, and was never happier than when she was gossiping with someone.

She had always held her tongue about Halpine and his affairs, being not only paid to do so, but having, also, a wholesome terror of arousing the man's displeasure by doing otherwise.

Now that the man was absent, however, and people began to speak suspiciously about him, and to say that Harry was as bad as he was, and had abducted May, she could no longer hold her peace.

"It's all a lie," she declared to General Ainsworth's housekeeper. "Harry Halpine is as good a young man as ever lived. He wouldn't do any one a wrong. Don't talk to me about his having to do as his father does, for Hal Halpine ain't his father, and never was."

"Well, at any rate, he brought the young man up, Mrs. Bounce," declared the other gossip.

"Suppose he did, Mrs. Morrill; that don't say that he can change his natural character. The boy is good and Halpine is bad; he'll be getting better all the time, and Halpine will get worse."

"You seem to know a good deal about the affair for one that's kept quiet all these——"

"Of course I do. I remember the wreck. I remember the baby being picked up, and I knew just the temptations Halpine had, with Jack and Jan and that set, though he didn't need much urging to go astray, as it came natural. Some folks forgets what happens fifteen or twenty years ago, but I don't. I know I'm sort of an old woman, but I ain't afraid to tell my age as some is, Mrs. Morrill."

Now, the general's housekeeper was one of the very persons who wished to conceal their ages, and, although older than Mrs. Bounce, she always declared that she was but forty, and could not remember what had happened in the town more than ten years before.

It happened, therefore, that when, just about this time, a woman was seen in the town who wanted to know about a certain shipwreck that had occurred some years before, and the whereabouts of one Mrs. Jolly, formerly the landlady of the village tavern, she was first referred to Mrs. Morrill, who sent her to Mrs. Bounce.

"I don't remember as far back as that, madame, although I have heard something of it," the good woman declared. "But if you go to Mrs. Bounce, in the white cottage near the beach, half a mile from the wharf—Captain Halpine's it is; anyone

can tell you the place—you will find out all you want to know."

Therefore, one afternoon when Mrs. Bounce was sitting in the living room of the white cottage, knitting stockings for Harry, and wondering where he was all this time, she was somewhat surprised to see a strange woman coming up the neat gravel walk, and looking with interest upon the house and its pleasant surroundings.

When the heavy, highly-polished brass knocker clamored out its summons on the oaken door she arose, and, laying down her work, smoothing out her white apron and arranging her cap ribbons, went to the door and admitted a woman of middle age, dressed in black and having a careworn look upon a face that had once been strikingly beautiful.

The housekeeper looked fixedly at the woman, gave a sort of gasp, and then inquired her business at the cottage, stating that both Captain Halpine and his son were absent.

"I do not wish to see either of them," returned the other. "I wish to learn where to find one Mrs. Jolly, who once kept the tavern in this town some fifteen years ago."

"At the time of the shipwreck?" murmured the housekeeper, half unconsciously.

"Yes, yes, and it is of that I wish to speak," cried the other, eagerly. "If you can tell me aught of that, I pray you do not keep me in suspense."

Mrs. Bounce took her visitor into the sitting-room, placed her in the easy-chair, and taking a seat where she could study the other's face, her own being in the shade, said slowly:

"I am the best one to go to for any information concerning Mrs. Jolly, seeing that I am that person herself."

"Oh, then it is fortunate that I made the mistake, and found you instead of Mrs. Bounce."

"There ain't no mistake, 'cause I am Mrs. Bounce, too."

"I do not understand how——"

"Well, you see, I was the Widow Jolly fifteen years ago, and I kept the village tavern, 'cause a lone widow must do something, you know, for a living, though tavern-keeping was better business than it is now, being as there wasn't so many of 'em, and sailors drank more rum and such. However, Captain Bounce came along, and he was old and gouty, and had a fortune made in the East India trade and a little smuggling, too, I don't doubt, and when he asked me to be his'n I sold out the tavern and became his wife.

"He lived five years, and then I became the Widow Bounce, and it was discovered that he hadn't as much of a fortune as folks supposed, and doctor's bills and idleness had taken nearly all of it, and there was I left to shift for myself with not more'n a hundred dollars after all was settled up, and too old for the matrimonial market.

"Then, as I knew a good deal about Captain Halpine's concerns, and he thought it worth while to pay me to keep still, I became his housekeeper, and have been for ten years, and if anybody knows more about this coast than I do, barring the Twenty Doctors, I'd like to see 'em."

"Then you remember the wreck of the English ship Vesper, which occurred on this coast sixteen years ago this September?"

"I don't know her name, and no one did, though Bounce told me afterward that such a ship was missing, and that a rich man and his infant child was supposed to have gone down, and that a man whose character was not above suspicion had also perished."

"There was a wreck at that time, then? It is sufficient if you remember that."

"Well, I do remember it, but of all the passengers, officers, and crew of that ship only one was saved, and he was a boy of two years old or such."

"And he——"

"Is now alive," said Mrs. Bounce, completing the sentence which the stranger was too much excited to finish.

"He was wrapped in a sea cloak?" demanded the other eagerly.

"Yes, and that sea cloak was his curse, and Hal Halpine's curse. It belonged to a pirate who had come to these parts to carry on his lawless trade. Bounce knew about him, and had been chased by him in times back, and when he heard how he had been missed from his old quarters, and had sailed to these parts, he knew that it was the same."

"Yes—yes, he was indeed a wicked man, as I afterward learned, but he was good to me and to my child, and when he died sent me word where I might possibly find the poor boy, giving your name with others."

"Sakes alive! How did he know me?"

"He passed through the town and heard of you. He dared not make himself known, for he learned that the child had been picked up and his papers found."

"Then he wasn't the father?"

"No; that poor boy was the son of rich and noble parents, but misfortune has overtaken them, and now I, his only surviving parent, seek to find him before I die."

"You are his mother?"

"Yes."

"I knew it. I saw his looks in your face. I knew he was not a pirate's son."

"No, no, he is of good and gentle birth. This strange man was a passenger on the Vesper, but no one knew whence he came or whither he was bound, nor even his name, as he called himself *Personne*, which is French for no one.

"He was kind to my husband, who perished in the wreck, he was gentle to me, and my poor child thought the world of him, and to him owed his life, for *Personne* wrapped him in his sea cloak and placed him in a boat, which was immediately washed away.

"The ship went to pieces a moment afterward, and all were said to have perished, but *Personne* and myself were carried away many miles on a bit of wreckage, and picked up half dead by a vessel bound to France.

"Passing near the coast, however, the man was put ashore, after having first asked me my name and address, and promising one day to see me, having told me something of his past life and what he had been, but promising to do better.

"I thought myself alone, but lately I received a message from him, which had been written long before, and intrusted to a companion, which told me where I might find my boy. The man had kept his promise to me, and though then five years dead, I felt grateful to him.

"He had been here, had learned that his secret was no longer his own, but in the hands of an honest man, and had gone away, settled in a distant part, and tried to redeem his past."

"More than Halpine can say," muttered the housekeeper, "for he has brought a blight on the poor boy the wicked pirate would have saved."

"And where is he now?"

"No one knows, and many are ready to speak evil of him."

"Oh, merciful Heaven! Can it be that he has gone astray?"

"No!" retorted Mrs. Bounce firmly. "I would trust him as I would trust the sun. Some day he will come back, give Captain Dash up to justice, silence the lying tongues of his slanderers, carry the Government vessel through the Twenty Doctors, and break up the den of the smugglers forever."

"Thanks for those brave words, my good friend, and thank Heaven that it has directed me to this spot, and that one day I shall see my son."

"Amen to it all," murmured the housekeeper devotedly, "for I know that he is worthy to be the son of the proudest lady in Christendom."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SHARK'S LATEST VICTIM.

Captain Dash had been caught in a trap, and knew that his case was a desperate one.

He had considered his situation on the island such a safe one that he had been neglectful of keeping a watch of the approaches to it.

He believed Harry to be dead, and knew that no one else could carry a vessel through the channel.

It was only at the last moment that, happening to be on the cliff, he saw a schooner threading her way through the intricate passage and approaching the island.

He heard the cheers of men on board and knew at once that the task would be successfully accomplished.

He supposed, of course, that Harry had escaped drowning the night he had fled from the vessel, that he had at last reached Sea Cliff, and was now bringing his father's enemies against him.

"The young ingrate!" hissed Halpine. "This is all his vows amount to. He swore he would never turn against me, and here he comes with an armed vessel and a hostile crew to drive me from my snug retreat. His life shall pay for this!"

Then he hurried down to the shore and made all haste to man a little battery on the rocks, placed there more to avert a possible danger than from any idea that it would ever need to be used.

Then he hurried aboard his own vessel and sailed out of the lake so as to oppose the enemy's passage and drive their vessel upon the rocks.

He was too late to accomplish all his plans, and now the fight had begun and must be carried on to the end.

For the second time the two vessels clashed together, and now the smugglers made fast, determined to exterminate their foes, as they well knew that now no other course lay open.

Had the attack been less sudden they could have retired to the beach or to the rocks and prevented the government men from landing.

From the little fort in the lake channel they could have successfully stormed the vessel, and made her position untenable.

Now, however, they must fight to the death, for they were cornered, and every avenue of escape was closed.

With a ringing shout the sailors and marines met them as they attempted to leap aboard, and a withering fire was poured into their ranks which caused the most terrible havoc.

Captain Dash urged them on, and even led the charge, fighting like a very demon, and looking everywhere for Harry, against whom the fiercest wrath was directed.

The boy was nowhere to be seen, and presently Halpine caught sight of Jan pushing toward him, parrying the blows of his late comrades, but not attempting to return them.

"Take the scoundrel alive!" cried the man. "He must not escape us."

"Where is that cowardly brat whom I have called son?" demanded the smuggler.

"You will know soon enough," answered Jan, pressing forward.

Many of the smugglers, fearing that defeat was certain, sprang overboard, intending to swim to shore and secrete themselves in the woods and among the rocks until the enemy had departed.

It was a fatal move to many of them, for in their haste they forgot the ravenous shark that had so long infested the lake and made it so perilous.

A red stain on the water, the swift movements of a shark

fin over the waves and the sudden gleam, every now and then, of the voracious creature's white belly and the flash of his cruel teeth gave speedy evidence of their awful fate.

One man alone of all who had leaped overboard reached the shore safely, and this was Pike, who now thought to save himself by doing the prisoners a good turn.

He hurried off to where May was confined, burst open the door with a crowbar, and, releasing the girl, said quickly:

"Your lover has returned to the island with assistance. Don't you hear the noise of the fight?"

"And I shall be rescued from this miserable place?"

"Yes, for they are bound to rout out the captain, and are pressing him hard."

"I must see the fight and witness that cruel man's defeat."

"Wait a minute till I get the other lady—the poor crazy woman."

Then Pike dashed away to the captain's house, and soon reappeared with Kate by his side.

They then hurried down to the beach, whence they saw a cloud of fire and smoke, and heard shouts, yells, the booming of cannon, the rattle of musketry, and the clash of steel.

"Is Harry there?" cried May.

"Yes, miss, for no one else could have entered, but I didn't happen to see him."

"He has come to deliver us!" cried Kate. "I told that wicked man long ago that the curse would fall upon him."

"And so it has, for the young fellow has turned against him, and I can't blame him, after the captain did his best to kill him."

"The villain!" cried Kate. "It was through Harry that he discovered the secret of the island, and now he turns upon the lad."

"Yes, but the lad 'pears to be gettin' the best of it," muttered Pike.

For a space the whole scene was blotted from sight by a dense cloud of smoke, and the spectators on the beach could only surmise what was taking place.

On board the smuggler the fight was still going on as fiercely as ever.

The captain and those of his men who had determined to stand by him till the end were gathered on the quarter deck fighting like fiends.

"Upon them!" cried Reeve, and the entire band of sailors and marines hurled itself upon the handful of smugglers.

Man by man the latter fell, until Captain Dash and two others were all that remained.

"Surrender!" cried Reeve.

"Take him alive!" hissed Jan.

"This for you, traitor!" cried Halpine, as he suddenly sprang forward.

He thrust his sword right to the hilt in Jan's body, and the man fell to the deck with a cry of agony.

"Don't let him escape," he gasped, and then he fell back unconscious.

"Thus do I defy you all!" cried Halpine, and then, before anyone could divine his intention, he had leaped upon the low rail of the quarter-deck.

In another instant his form was cleaving the air, and in a twinkling he had disappeared under the waters.

The men hurried to the rail, and gazed over the side with the most intense interest watching for his reappearance.

He was never seen again, but a deep red stain upon the waters, and a sudden agitation of the surface where he had gone down, told their tale only too plainly.

The smuggler captain had fallen a prey to the dreaded monster of the lake, and had perished defiantly, with all his sins upon his head!

CHAPTER XXIII.

A GLOOMY PROSPECT.

Captain Dash was dead, and his band of smugglers completely broken up at last.

At the fall of their captain, those who had held out to the end yielded, and the fight was over.

Some had hidden in the hold of the vessel, and these now came out and delivered themselves up.

Jan was taken to the cabin of Reeve's vessel and looked after, it being important that he should recover, so as to take the vessel away from the island.

His wound was serious, and even fatal, but there was a prospect of his living for several hours, and this time must be made the most of.

Reeve and Sumner went on shore with a party, and Nat soon followed with another, it being their intention to explore the island, and take away whatever treasure might be found upon it.

Upon touching the shore Nat was at once met by May, who ran up to him joyously, and cried eagerly:

"Oh, Nat, you are Harry's friend. Tell me, is he safe?"

"I hope so," said Nat, wondering how he was to tell the poor girl of Harry's fate.

"You hope so? Is he then hurt?" she asked.

"I fear so."

"Where is he?" she gasped. "I must go to him at once."

"Alas, my poor girl, I don't know where you will find him."

"Is he not aboard your vessel?"

"No."

"Then he has been killed!" she shrieked, turning deathly pale and falling upon Nat's shoulder.

"I do not know where he is, May," said Nat, hurriedly. "He was not with us when we entered."

"Not aboard the vessel?"

"No."

"Then who piloted you through the channel?"

"Jan."

"Ah, then he remembered the directions Harry gave him."

"Did Harry tell Jan how to enter the lake through the Twenty Doctors?"

"Yes," and May explained briefly how the lad had come to do so.

"Poor Harry is missing," said Nat. "Jan says he sprang overboard from his father's vessel and was never seen again."

"He may have escaped!" cried May, hopefully. "He has been picked up by a passing vessel, he has been carried to a distance, but he will return!"

"Pray to heaven he may!" muttered Nat, impressively.

"Oh, I know it, I feel it!" cried May. "He will come back and be his own loving, joyous self again, now that the cloud has lifted from his life!"

Nat wished that he could think as May did, but he could not help feeling that if Harry were alive he would have appeared before this.

He did not tell May what he thought, however, but made her believe that he was as hopeful as she was herself.

Meantime, the men from the vessel were exploring the island and preparing to remove the contents of the storehouses and magazines.

Nat went aboard the government vessel with May and Halpine's wife, and then descended to the cabin to see how Jan was getting on.

"You're his friend, ain't you?" asked Jan, weakly, when Nat appeared.

"Harry's friend? Yes."

"Then I wish he were here, for you'll all need him."

"We wish so too, indeed we do!"

"I don't see any help for you," muttered Jan. "I told 'em to look out for that treacherous snake. They should have taken him alive."

"Why, what good will that do us? The man is well gotten rid of."

"He would be if we were out of this cursed island."

"But you can take us out."

"No," said Jan, with an effort, "I can't. The way out is not like the way in; and I don't know it."

"Don't know the way out?" gasped Nat.

"No; the lad wouldn't tell me that. That's why I was particular that Halpine should be took."

"My God, then we are doomed to stay here forever!"

Nat hurried on deck, took a boat, and went ashore, where he presently found Lieutenant Reeve.

To him he hurriedly stated the situation.

The two then went on board, where Sumner had just preceded them, and descended at once to the cabin.

"What is it they tell me, my poor fellow?" asked Reeve of Jan. "It seems you have got us in here and can't take us out."

"I told you to be sure not to let the cap'n escape," murmured Jan. "I trusted everythin' to that."

"Don't you think you could take us out?"

"I could try; but the very currents that took us in would be agin us goin' out. The channel is an awful one goin' out, and I've seen Dash himself turn pale when runnin' it."

"It is our only hope," muttered Sumner.

"I'll try it," muttered Jan. "Help me on my feet, and I'll——"

The man suddenly fell back on the pillow.

Then he lay perfectly still, and the little cabin was as silent as the grave itself.

For some minutes the dreadful stillness remained unbroken, and during that time Jan never moved.

He was dead, and the last hope of escape had died with him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

It did not take long for the news to travel through the vessel that Captain Dash had been avenged, and that his foes were prisoners upon the island.

Lieutenant Reeve found Harry's chart, which Jan had used, and looked it over most carefully to see if he could discover a way out of the difficulty.

The currents were all put down, but Harry had not marked out the courses, and the officer was more than ever impressed, after seeing the chart, with the hopelessness of their position.

The vessel was taken out as far as the entrance of the lake channel, but no one dared to go further, the sight of those twenty islands with the rushing waters and whirling tides being sufficient to daunt the stoutest hearts.

They therefore went back to the lake and dropped anchor, Lieutenant Reeve ordering all hands on shore.

"As we must live here," he said, "we had better make ourselves as comfortable as possible."

The huts were therefore examined and made ready for dwelling in, the captain's house being set aside for May and Mrs. Halpine.

The storehouses made very good barracks, and the huts were set aside for the use of the officers, those of the men who could not be otherwise accommodated living on board as before.

Reeve was appointed President of the little colony, with

Sumner as vice-president, Nat as secretary of state, and the other officers occupying various positions.

The provisions were overhauled, and a careful estimate made of how long they ought to last, the time being determined as little less than a year.

The soil of the island was fertile, however, and it was not too late to plant corn and even potatoes, and this was done, the eyes of the potatoes alone being used, the rest being saved to boil.

An acre was thus sown, and another in corn, the president deciding that it was better to live on the salted meat, and on bread, with a few vegetables, until they could begin to gather their crops.

The lake furnished fish, and birds could be found in the woods, so that there was no immediate danger of their starving, and matters promised to progress very satisfactorily.

While admitting that all these preparations for an extended stay on the island might be wise enough, May would never acknowledge that Harry was dead, but steadily maintained that he was alive and would deliver them.

Nat at last came to her way of thinking, and two or three days after the death of Captain Dash he went up on the southern bluffs, accompanied by May, to look for a vessel.

"We can at least see whether Lieutenant Hall is still keeping watch," he said, "for he must think it strange that we have not returned."

When they reached the top of the cliff they sat down and enjoyed the bracing air which blew from the sea, and were quite enraptured with the extended view that lay before them.

"I can see no vessel," said Nat. "Hall must have thought that we perished on the day we came here."

There was not a sail in sight over all the ocean, and Nat could not help thinking that even were a whole fleet to pass they would be no better off, since no one could approach the island.

While thus engaged in thought he was suddenly aroused by a startled exclamation from May.

"Look! look!" she cried, seizing him by the arm. "There is a vessel approaching."

Nat turned a quick glance toward the islands lying at his feet, and saw a small yacht emerge from behind one of them and speed toward where they sat.

He could scarcely believe his eyes, and for a moment he was unable to utter a sound.

"It is Harry," he at length cried, almost beside himself. "He is alive; he is coming to take us from the island."

"Thank God!" sobbed May, convulsively.

They watched the vessel glide from island to island and at last sweep right for the cliff, and then all doubt was cleared away.

"Come!" cried Nat, seizing May in his arms, "we must be the first to meet him."

Then, still supporting the trembling girl, Nat dashed down the steep and rugged path almost at the risk of his life, never once pausing until he reached the level.

Then through the wood he hurried till he came out upon the beach, in full view of the lake.

At that moment a graceful little vessel swept like a white bird over the bosom of the lake, and then there arose a cheer that made the hills ring.

Jumping into a boat, placing May in the stern and seizing an oar, Nat sculled rapidly to the little yacht, and soon saw Harry himself about to put off in a boat.

Harry seized May in his arms the instant the two boats met, and the lovers were folded in a warm embrace.

"Are you a prisoner, too, Nat?" cried Harry.

"We are all prisoners," answered Nat, "and you have come to deliver us."

"Then Captain Dash has conquered?"

"No, he is dead!"

"But how did you get here?"

Nat told the whole story while they were rowing to shore, and Harry then knew for the first time how providential his arrival had been.

He had succeeded in getting a boat, resolving to brave everything to rescue May from the island.

He had heard something of a fight, but as he had not yet been to Sea Cliff, knew nothing of the particulars.

It was a joyful day to the little colonists when Harry appeared among them like one risen from the dead, for now they knew that they would be set free, and their joy knew no bounds.

No time was lost in getting ready to leave, but as it was important that the smuggling schooner should be taken away, Harry first took out Reeve and his party, returning in his own boat for those left behind on the schooner.

Three or four hours after his appearance at the island Harry sat on the deck of the schooner, now in charge of Sergeant Sumner, watching the island fade away in the distance.

When he reached Sea Cliff a new surprise awaited him, and for the first time in many years he beheld his mother.

He was no longer Harry Halpine, but Harry Montjoy, the heir to large estates in England, a millionaire in his own right, and the representative of one of the oldest families in the kingdom.

There was now no further opposition to his wedding May Maxwell, and, in fact, General Ainsworth made himself quite ridiculous by his toadying to the young fellow whom he had formerly so grossly insulted.

Our story is finished, and but little more needs to be told.

Harry still lives in the land of his adoption, having renounced all claim on the property in England, having already more than enough, earned by honest labor as a seaman, and then a captain and owner of his own vessel.

He is married to May, and lives for her alone, his mother having long since died, as has also poor Mrs. Halpine, who did not long survive her return from the island.

Nat is Harry's chum and friend, as of old, and they often speak of their former adventures on the island, now no longer visited, and a greater mystery than ever.

Harry does not care to go there any more, and has never visited it since he took May home, and there it lies, grim-silent, and mysterious, its shores untrodden, its waters unplowed by vessels, and its secrets guarded by those terrible sentinels—THE TWENTY DOCTORS.

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